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### Public credibility

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# Public Credibility

A Study of the Preferred Personal Qualities  
of Cabinet Ministers in the Netherlands

Eva Wisse



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Many people who work in political and public organisations in the Netherlands such as the Parliament, ministries and research organisations have tirelessly explained to me their work, thoughts, ideas and observations on matters of public credibility, operational performance of political leaders and the role of the media. Their intellect and humour brought lots of fun into the possibly otherwise boring task of data-collection and -analysis. They have asked to remain anonymous, so I will not ‘out’ them here, but nevertheless, thanks to all secretary-generals, director-generals, directors, political assistants, political advisors, policy makers and communications advisors who were willing to sit down for lengthy interviews. This book is as much yours as it is mine!

That brings me to another group of ‘owners’ of the stories told in this book. These are the cabinet ministers this dissertation is about. Even though the cabinet ministers are just ‘cases’ meant to be studied for the greater good of social science, rather than for journalism-like exposure purposes, those involved may feel uncomfortable being spoken about the way they are in this thesis. They have been ranked on public credibility, their performance - as observed by their inner circle trustees - has been exposed, and their reported media blunders have been listed and scrutinized again. At the end of the thesis, this leads to hypotheses on the reasons behind their victories and losses in terms of public credibility. In spite of their possible discomfort with all of this, I hope they will read this dissertation and I hope they will enjoy it. I certainly have very much enjoyed writing it. The tangled mess of variables around public credibility may be a little less messy now. Thanks to all involved, (including the cabinet ministers of Balkenende IV who have worked *very hard* to make the Netherlands an even better place), this dissertation is

here to be read by those who are interested in higher-public credibility leadership and the struggles these special, gifted people go through in order to attain it.

Thanks to my dear friends and paranymphs Daphne Bantjes and Malu Vermeer. Daphne was my earliest school buddy, Malu my University girlfriend. Having them by my side at the PhD ceremony reminds me of the difference between the girls we once were and the women we have become. May our friendship take us through many more stages in life together!

I would like to thank my loved ones for being truly interested in the research project, praising me and making me feel like writing a PhD thesis is quite an accomplishment. It would be easy to forget that this is a big deal, if it wasn't for my sweet friends, my wonderful parents Jan Pieter and Bella, and lovely brother Koen and his girl Marjo-Anne. Last but not least, I owe thanks to my very patient boyfriend who, through the years, simply kept saying 'get it done!' Well Mark, it is done, and the few times I thought about quitting, I kept going only to make you proud. Thank you for your never ending support.

Tilburg/Fort Lauderdale, January 2014.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This dissertation shows how Dutch cabinet ministers attain public credibility, and what causes them to lose it. In Part I the thesis starts with a survey in which approximately 5000 citizens are asked which qualities are those of a higher-credibility (in Dutch: *geloofwaardige*) cabinet minister. Over the course of two years,<sup>1</sup> the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister remained surprisingly stable: Dutch citizens are looking for ministers who are first and foremost reliable, honest and competent. This prototype of a desired leader seems fairly deeply rooted in the Dutch political culture. A literature study about political leadership in the Netherlands indicates that the Dutch have long since valued the trust-related traits in combination with competence (meaning ministerial capabilities, skills and dossier-knowledge) rather than celebrity-like inspirational leadership citizens in other countries may be more drawn to.

Part II of this dissertation shows what happens when 5000 respondents who represent the Dutch citizenry, are asked to rate sixteen ministers, all in office during the Balkenende IV cabinet term, for every one of the three qualities they chose in Part I. This results in a ranking of cabinet ministers: two of them are considered the most credible (credibility being a combination of *perceived* reliability, honesty and competence), and two of them have gained relatively little public credibility. One interesting case was found in the middle of the ranking. The cases are referred to as HPC (higher), MPC (medium) and LPC (lower public credibility) cabinet ministers.

In Part III the five cases are studied in an attempt to explain the difference: why have several ministers succeeded in attaining public credibility, why have others failed? Two explanatory variables are brought into play: operational performance and media appearance. Operational performance refers to ministerial skills (how capable are the cabinet ministers according to experts?), operational style (how do they do their work?), and performance results (are they finishing their policy goals?). Through

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<sup>1</sup> 2009-2011

in-depth expert interviews with those who form the inner circle of the cabinet Balkenende IV,<sup>2</sup> and through desk-research, both described in Parts III-VI, a few conclusions surface. Little information about operational performance by cabinet ministers trickles down to citizens. The elements of operational performance that do somehow relate to public credibility, are linked to a minister's media skills rather than their political, policy-making or connective skills. Of all elements of operational performance as defined in this dissertation, policy goal realization seems least related to the ability of a cabinet minister to attain public credibility.

The other main explanatory variable, media appearance, explains the difference between HPC and LPC cabinet ministers a lot better. However, not just any media analysis will reveal this. Simply counting positively and negatively tinted media messages (such as newspaper headlines) about cabinet ministers does not reveal any patterns of public credibility. It is the analysis of communicated personality patterns in Parts V and VI that shows that LPC cabinet ministers communicate undesirable personality patterns that are not commonly related to good leadership, such as the accommodating and reticent patterns. Also, LPC cabinet ministers lack strong leadership patterns and the much desired conscientious communicated pattern.

The conscientious pattern contains a 'magic' set of communicated personality traits such as honesty, reliability, and a seemingly dutiful approach to the ministerial tasks ahead. The conscientious-dominant combination of patterns has helped many cabinet ministers in the Netherlands, including several long-lasting prime ministers in the past two decades,<sup>3</sup> to attain public credibility.

The other route to HPC in terms of communicated personality patterns is showing the dauntless-ambitious-outgoing personality profile. One of the HPC ministers in the cabinet Balkenende IV, and several other successful politicians in the recent history of Dutch politics, have booked great

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<sup>2</sup> In office between 2007 and 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Some claim that this was the secret behind Wim Kok's success as a well-accepted and admired Prime Minister, and the pattern was also present in Jan Peter Balkenende's communicated personality profile.



results with this appearance strategy. Although the conscientious-dominant type seems to be more commonly accepted by the public, the dauntless-ambitious-outgoing or charismatic type can very well become a higher public credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup>

Whether cabinet ministers truly perform behind the scenes has little or nothing to do with their ability to attain higher public credibility. However, every minister or state secretary needs public credibility in order to get a chance to remain seated, and get things done in The Hague. In other words, they all need to appear credible throughout the cabinet term. Especially at the onset, before addressing the real problems in their policy field. This dissertation advises cabinet ministers to pick an appearance strategy that has been proven successful<sup>5</sup> and to make attaining public credibility their first priority.

Cabinet ministers who fail to build themselves a desirable image and bring their public credibility to an acceptable level,<sup>6</sup> trigger the media to weaken their position significantly. This will have a potentially time-consuming and therefore devastating effect on the core task most Dutch cabinet ministers truly have on their agenda: getting the political and policy goals from the cabinet agreement<sup>7</sup> done in a timely manner. This dissertation offers clues on how public credibility can be gained in order to enable cabinet ministers to do their jobs.

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<sup>4</sup> Some claim that this is seen in Jan Peter Balkenende's successor Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

<sup>5</sup> The conscientious-dominant and the ambitious-dauntless-outgoing communicated personality profiles are excellent choices.

<sup>6</sup> See Part II for more information.

<sup>7</sup> In Dutch: *regeerakkoord*.

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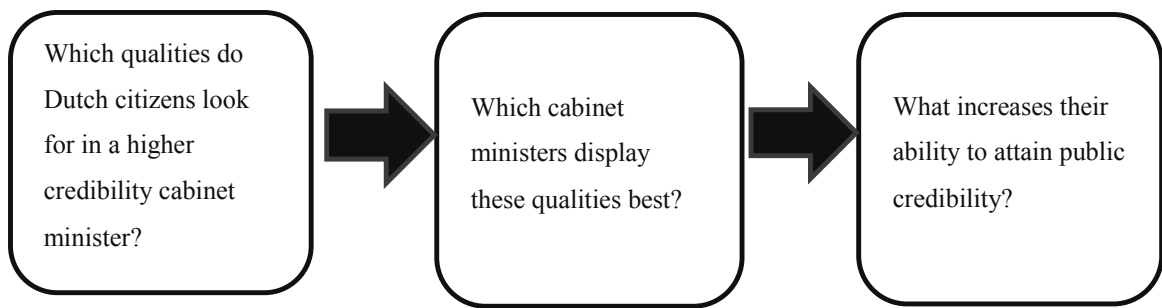
## UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC CREDIBILITY OF CABINET MINISTERS

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner argue that “Credibility is about how leaders earn the trust and confidence of their constituents. It's about what people demand of their leaders as a prerequisite to willingly contribute to their hearts, minds, bodies and souls” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003: introduction).<sup>1</sup> Over the course of three decades, the authors have asked constituents what they demand from leaders. They found that leaders need to be honest, forward-looking, inspiring and competent in order to attain credibility. Although Kouzes and Posner conclude that their findings are universal, it is unlikely that these four qualities of leaders have the same importance in every culture and for every type of leadership relationship. Their research focuses on business leadership. This dissertation focuses on government leadership. The aim is to find what a certain type of constituent (Dutch citizens) demands from a certain kind of leader (a cabinet Minister),<sup>2</sup> and how public credibility of the office holders can be understood. An overview:

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<sup>1</sup> The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes and Posner, 2007) and High Credibility Leadership: How Leaders Gain and Lose it, Why People Demand It (Kouzes and Posner, 1993 and 2003).

<sup>2</sup> It is relevant to discuss a few facts about Dutch cabinet ministers and the political system in which they operate, for those who are not familiar with them. In the Netherlands, each cabinet consists of a dozen or more cabinet ministers who, together with the Queen, form the government. In theory, each term lasts for four years, however the actual practice since World War II has been between two and three years, due to a lack of balance between the executive and legislative powers. This becomes particularly apparent when a 2/3 majority of the Parliament decides the government is no longer reliable, thereby legally forcing the government to resign (Arend Lijphart, 1999). Due to this rule, and its frequent application, the Dutch Parliament (the legislative power) is relatively dominant compared to the Government (the executive power). The other distinctive feature of a Dutch cabinet is the coalition system. The leaders of a cabinet are the prime minister (the leader of the largest party), and one vice prime minister for each additional coalition partner. After a parliamentary election, a cabinet is formed. This process is called *the formation*. The leader of the largest party negotiates with other political parties until one or two good partners, who together have a majority of seats in the Parliament, are brought together. The parties invite their most promising members to become cabinet ministers. These cabinet ministers are not elected, but appointed. The party leaders divide the portfolios (ministries) and then the installment and inauguration of the cabinet takes place. In the case of the Balkenende IV cabinet, there were sixteen cabinet ministers and a number of additional state secretaries, who carry executive, but no ministerial, responsibilities. At the beginning of the cabinet's term, these cabinet ministers formulated their policy goals. They also promised the Parliament and the public that they would accomplish these goals during the course of their term, and would organize a day for accountability once a year (this is traditionally called “accountability day” and takes place on a Wednesday in May). The Balkenende IV cabinet governed from February 22, 2007 through February 15, 2010.



The following main research questions inspired this dissertation. They are discussed throughout this introduction:

1. Which qualities do Dutch citizens look for in a higher credibility cabinet minister, and which cabinet minister displays these qualities best?
2. What increases a cabinet minister's ability to attain public credibility?

#### **Which qualities do Dutch Citizens Look for in a Higher Credibility Cabinet**

**Minister?** International best sellers such as *Why We Hate Politics* (Hay, 2007) and *Why Politics Matters* (Stoker, 2006) have demonstrated the international interest of journalists and practitioners, as well as political scientists, in the negative thoughts and feelings of citizens regarding politicians, governments, and democracy. Others have discussed whether public support for, satisfaction with, and trust in government institutions have been on a steady decline since World War II (see Luhmann 1979; Putnam 1993/2002; Fukuyama 1995; Nye 1997:89; Brehm & Rahn 1997; Norris 1999; Hardin, 2002; Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003; and Rothstein & Uslander, 2005). More recently, in the Netherlands, Hendriks (2009) and Bovens & Wille (2011) have discussed evidence and possible reasons for an apparently steep and temporary decline of citizen support for, satisfaction with, and trust in government during the years between 2001 and 2004. At the same time, citizens of the Netherlands report a fair amount of trust in government institutions, while their trust in government officials is more problematic

(Broekhoven, M., E. Evenhuis, V. Heitkamp & M. Niessink, 2010; SCP, 2010, 2011, 2012). Hay (2007) argues that recent works on the subject incorrectly focus on the “demand side” and the citizens’ lack of participation, instead of the “supply side:” the communicated appeal of politicians and their capacity to deliver their messages. Hay states that the latter rather than the former explain a great deal about citizens’ disaffection.

Blaming the demand side for the fact that citizens hate or are ambivalent about politics may be convenient for politicians, but according to Hay, it is not the solution to the problem. In this dissertation, Hay’s account will be taken a step further by researching what citizens demand from cabinet ministers in the Netherlands: what the demand side wants from the supply side, and which thoughts about “the ideal cabinet minister” reside in the “hearts and minds”<sup>3</sup> of respondents.<sup>4</sup>

*Box 1. Why research credibility instead of trust?* Credibility, rather than trust, is a central topic of this dissertation. The advantage of researching trust would be that it enables researchers to compare their analyses to the results of national and international social surveys, such as the SCP and the World Values Studies, as many authors in the field of government studies have done (see Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003; Dalton, 2004; Welzel & Inglehart, 2009; Hendriks, 2010; Bovens & Wille, 2011). However, the problem with using trust as a concept for measuring the opinions of citizens regarding government officials, and the reason why credibility instead of trust is the dependent variable in this dissertation, lies in the meaning and implications of the word trust. Although trust is necessary as a foundation in any well-functioning relationship, full public trust is not

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<sup>3</sup> Kouzes and Posner (1993, 2003, 2008)

<sup>4</sup> Compare to NKO “ideal Prime Minister” items, DPES/NKO 1989. See also [www.roosvonk.nl/lijsttrekkers](http://www.roosvonk.nl/lijsttrekkers).

necessarily a desirable feature in a democracy, because someone should always be keeping an eye on those responsible for the government, as power may corrupt intentions (Frissen, P.H.A., 2009).

In Dutch, credibility is translated as *geloofwaardigheid*. Although *credibility* is the proper English term for the Dutch term *geloofwaardigheid*, some of the nuance may be lost in translation. *Geloofwaardig* literally means “belief worthy” or “worthy of someone’s belief,” as *geloof* means “belief” and *waardig* means “worthy.” Why a citizen believes in a certain cabinet minister and what the cabinet minister has done to inspire this belief remains an open question. This is exactly why the concept fits; its meaning can be defined and the definition will vary depending on who was asked.

In their research, James Kouzes and Barry Posner (1993, 2003, and 2008) found that constituents around the world want leaders who are first and foremost honest, forward-looking, competent, and inspiring. Do citizens in the Netherlands look for the same attributes in those who lead the national administration? Literature pertaining to the Dutch political system, culture, democracy, and leadership style provides reasons to believe that constituents in the Netherlands may have different preferences than constituents in Anglo-Saxon democracies when it comes to preferred characteristics of its political- and government leaders (see Lijphart, 1999; Hendriks & Toonen, 2001).

In this dissertation, we assume that cabinet ministers, as ambassadors of Dutch ministries, are important institutions in the Dutch democracy, and that their public credibility and the public credibility of the national administration as a whole are strongly intertwined. Consequently, in order to secure the public credibility of the national administration, we need to know how to

optimize the relationship between citizens and cabinet ministers. To do that, we need to know what it is that citizens want from cabinet ministers.

*Box 2. The dependent variable: public credibility, and related concepts.* Public credibility is related to legitimacy of, support for, satisfaction with, and public trust in government bodies and persons.<sup>5</sup> According to a common definition, credibility reflects the believability of those institutions and persons. Attaining legitimacy, support, satisfaction, trust and credibility may happen simultaneously, since every one of these concepts requires citizens to make similar assessments: do I accept this institution? Am I satisfied with it? Should I support it? Do I trust it? Do I believe things will be all right if I give it some credit? The same basic mechanisms that apply to any of these assessments, apply to public credibility assessments. Two similarities between credibility and legitimacy occur from literature: both require a relationship; and both allow the administration to act (discretionary authority) and “spend” the credit it was given (Tyler, 2003). Public credibility (believability) may have a more temporary and fluid nature than legitimacy (acceptance), and seems to be taken away rather swiftly when a cabinet minister makes a public mistake. Furthermore, credibility may be attained by either individual leaders (persons) or institutions, while legitimacy usually concerns administrative institutions only. Charisma (a basis for legitimacy in the definition of Max Weber in 1947), refers *exclusively* to individuals.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Legitimacy represents acceptance by people of the need to bring their behavior into line with the dictates of an external authority” (Tyler, 1990: 25; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003: 514). According to Tyler (2003), legitimacy depends not only on the instruments of reward and coercion the authority possesses, but also on certain perceived features of the authority convincing the constituent that the authority is worth its trust (see also Beetham 1991). According to Sunshine & Tyler, judgements on ‘procedural fairness’ and ‘police performance’ may determine the public legitimacy of the police, while ‘empowerment of, and cooperation with the police’ occur from legitimacy, as does ‘compliance with the law’. (2003: 513-528).

<sup>6</sup> Charismatic authority, according to Max Weber, is “resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.”



Up to now, citizens have not been asked to pick qualities of a prototypical, more credible cabinet minister,<sup>7</sup> so I have done so. The survey took place four times in total between 2009 and 2011. At every measurement, approximately 5000 respondents were asked to pick five characteristics of the ideal higher public credibility cabinet minister from a list of twenty-four. The outcome is a top three of qualities Dutch citizens consistently prefer most in cabinet ministers: reliability, honesty and competence. We will discuss the outcome of this first section of the citizens' survey further in Part I.

<i>Box 3. Definitions &amp; Synonyms of Credibility</i>	
Dictionary.com	Plausible, likely, reasonable, tenable, believable, trustworthy
	Capable of being believed
	Worthy of belief or confidence
Merriam Webster Dictionary (2011)	The quality or power of inspiring belief
	Capacity for belief
David Straker, <i>Changing Minds</i> (2008)	A credible person is expert (experienced, qualified, intelligent, skilled) and trustworthy (honest, fair, unselfish, caring)
James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner, <i>The Leadership Challenge</i> (2007)	Being Honest, Competent, Inspiring and Forward-looking  Credibility in practice: 'Do What You Say You Will Do' (DWYSYWD)

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Source: Weber, Maximilian (1947). *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Chapter: "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization" translated by A. R. Anderson and Talcott Parsons, 1947. See also Eisenstadt 1968; Matheson 1987; Muller 1973; Shils 1965; Weber 1947-1986.

<sup>7</sup> A related, but different attempt was made in 2004 by the Dutch Social Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP), when it tested how many respondents agreed with the statement "we need less legislation and institutions, and more brave, indefatigable and devoted leaders who people can trust" (SCP, 2005: 348) [translation EW]. The number of people agreeing with this statement increased dramatically from 30% in 1996 to 61% in 2004. In spite of the fact that several scholars state that the people increasingly need strong leaders or "neo traditional leadership" (De Beus, 2006, see also Paul Dekker, 2006), the growing support for the statement could be due to support for the first part, pertaining to legislation, rather than for the second part, pertaining to the leaders.

Stephen M.R. Covey, The Speed of Trust (2006)	The four cores of credibility are Integrity, Intent, Capabilities and Results
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Answering the second part of the first research question requires asking Dutch citizens who, based on their own definition of preferred characteristics of cabinet ministers, they consider to be the most and least credible, in order to make a selection of interesting cases. The cabinet Balkenende IV is the frame of reference since it was in office during the data collection phase of the research project this dissertation is based upon. The results of the aforementioned citizens' survey will be discussed in Part II, and from there, five interesting cases were selected for further research. The selection includes two of the highest (HPC), one medium (MPC), and two of the lowest (LPC) cabinet ministers on a public credibility ranking as determined by citizens.<sup>8</sup>

**What increases a cabinet minister's ability to attain public credibility?** "Nowadays, a good director of communications is worth more to a cabinet minister than a good secretary-general."<sup>9</sup> This quote by Secretary-General R. van Zwol reveals two important elements of a cabinet minister's existence in the Netherlands: public/political image, supported by media appearance, and policy-making in terms of operational performance. Mark Elchardus (2002, 65,

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<sup>8</sup> From here on, the higher public credibility cabinet ministers will be referred to as HPC cabinet ministers, the medium credibility cabinet ministers as MPC cabinet ministers, and the lower public credibility cabinet ministers will be referred to as LPC cabinet ministers. The HPC and LPC cabinet ministers were selected for further research because these cases were the furthest away from one another in terms of the amount of credibility they attained, which provides the best chance to find patterns of HPC and patterns of LPC. Additionally, an MPC cabinet minister was added to the selection for several reasons: the MPC minister was the most credible female cabinet minister (1); the MPC minister provides a case for researching patterns of MPC (2); the case can be compared to both lower and higher public credibility cases, in order to research how the lower and higher public credibility cabinet ministers stand out from those who scored average credibility points (3).

<sup>9</sup> Source: personal communication with Mr. R. van Zwol, then Secretary-General at the Ministry of General Affairs, interview date January 14, 2009 (Mr. Van Zwol became S-G at the ministry of Finance in 2011, and S-G at the ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in 2013 – source: [www.algemenebestuursdienst.nl](http://www.algemenebestuursdienst.nl)).

85) agrees that that our democracies have become ‘drama democracies’, and that politicians cannot live a day without an excellent PR department.

Both Van Zwol and Elchardus imply that appearing successful, as opposed to being successful, may be crucial to excel in a world where media logic prevails.<sup>10</sup> After all, when the public image of a well-known individual is exceptionally well-developed, most people, including regular citizens, experts in a policy field, and even Parliamentarians, may assume the cabinet minister is actually successful, regardless of the fact that his or her policy accomplishments may be stagnating. Effective policy-making is an accomplishment that may only be noticed by a handful of experts and stakeholders, unless journalists decide to broadcast an evidence-based story about it.

The above-quoted, then highest-ranked civil servant of the Dutch government, touched on an interesting scientific debate: (to what extent) can public institutions influence their credibility with the public by increasing their operational performance, for example by implementing successful policies?

*Box 4. What is performance?* In this dissertation, the terms operational performance, executive performance, and ministerial performance are all defined as the execution and accomplishment of the entirety of work-related activities by cabinet ministers in the Netherlands. Policy performance is a narrower term that refers only to the execution and accomplishment of policy-making activities by cabinet ministers.

Which particular factors play a role in the attainment of public credibility nowadays?

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<sup>10</sup> According to Manin (1997), in the twentieth century political communication was first dominated by “political logic,” followed by “public logic” and, more recently, by “media logic.”

Many of the experts interviewed for this dissertation agreed with the Secretary General that a well-developed public image may be more important than actual policy results for cabinet ministers in the Netherlands, in terms of their chances of holding their seats and succeeding on the job for a four-year cabinet term. **Media appearance and operational performance** (including actual policy results), are the two central explanatory variables of this dissertation. The following is an overview of these two variables, and several components per variable, to be discussed further below:

	Components of Media Appearance	Components of Operational Performance
Part III	Nature of press coverage (positive/negative headlines)	Operational performance by cabinet ministers as defined by inner circle experts
	Volume of press coverage (notoriety)	
Part V/VI	Communicated personality patterns	Ministerial style and skill profile
		Policy goal realization

Since little is known regarding public credibility, a term that refers to the communicative relationship between government institutions on one side, and the public on the other, this dissertation aims to provide requirements for attaining public credibility. This dissertation aims to describe how cabinet ministers in the Netherlands have gained and lost public credibility between 2007 and 2010.

*Box 5. Credibility: a “hot” item?* There are several reasons for the selection of public credibility as the central topic of this dissertation. In the past few years, politicians have

frequently used the term “credibility” (in Dutch: *geloofwaardigheid*) to explain why cabinet ministers were fired, why it was a bad idea to vote for certain politicians, or why certain politicians decided to resign.<sup>11</sup> In politics and in public debates about politics, it seems more interesting when someone loses his or her public credibility than when someone retains it. Often, credibility is used as a term to indicate that something is wrong, which strengthens the argument that our understanding of public credibility as it pertains to cabinet ministers is problematic and requires research. Additionally, the term “public credibility” seemed to become more popular in the public and political debate in the years prior to 2010, and appeared in newspapers more often than before.<sup>12</sup> This may indicate an increased interest in the concept of public credibility. This dissertation attempts to clarify some of the unknown aspects of the public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands.

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<sup>11</sup>Examples:

- a) In 2008, Wouter Bos referred to the loss of public credibility on the part of Ella Vogelaar as a reason to fire her. In 2010 he used the term public credibility when discussing the resignation of the cabinet Balkenende IV.
- b) In February 2012, Job Cohen ended his party leadership because he had not been able to deal with the political and media reality when trying to “show the road to a decent society in a higher public credibility manner” (De Volkskrant, 24/02/2012. Original quote in Dutch: “Dit deed hij omdat hij onvoldoende geslaagd was ‘in de politieke en mediawerkelijkheid van Den Haag de weg naar deze fatsoenlijke samenleving geloofwaardig over het voetlicht te brengen”).
- c) Jan Marijnissen (SP) made headlines when he said, “Rutte and Samsom have credibility problems” (Trouw, 23/09/2012. Marijnissen: ‘Rutte en Samsom hebben geloofwaardigheidsprobleem’).
- d) In 2008, spin doctor Dig Ishta was hired to work with Jacqueline Cramer, reportedly to increase her credibility.

<sup>12</sup> The term “public credibility” appeared 58 times between September 2010-September 2011, 67 times between September 2009-September 2010, 51 times between September 2008-September 2009, 37 times between September 2007-September 2008, and 40 times between September 2006 and September 2007. Three of these years were election years (2006, 2010 and 2012).

Source: academic.lexisnexis.nl. Keywords: geloofwaardig or geloofwaardige in title and headline, and politiek or politieke everywhere in the article. Sources by type: all Dutch news.

Two explanatory variables, media appearance and operational performance, were chosen in order to further our understanding of the dependent variable public credibility. In the practice of politics and public service, as well as in the public debate and scientific literature, the distinction between media appearance and operational performance and their influence on the level of support for, satisfaction with, trust in, and credibility of those institutions has often been discussed, but empirical research has not provided satisfying answers. Each of the two possible explanatory variables of public credibility will be discussed briefly, along with additional reasons for why they, and not other variables, were chosen for this research project.<sup>13</sup>

**Media appearance** of cabinet ministers is the first main explanatory variable that will be used to analyze cases of public credibility. In political science, “media appearance” is an explanatory variable that refers to the way the media, particularly newspaper journalists and other members of the written press, cover stories about cabinet ministers. Media appearance is supposedly linked to cabinet ministers’ public credibility because it is the leading, and in many cases, sole relationship citizens have with politicians.<sup>14</sup> Also, as the previous quote from then-Secretary-General Van Zwol implies, media professionals (instead of politics or the public) dictate the rules of government-citizen and citizen-government communication.<sup>15</sup> A good director of communications uses his or her talents, knowledge, network, and skills to help

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<sup>13</sup> Instead of writing about finding the “determinants” of public credibility, a concept I am not comfortable with because it implies a causal relationship that is hard to confirm, I will call them explanatory variables. Although even the word “explanatory” may suggest too much research ambition in this pioneering phase of research on public credibility, and “understanding” is closer to the research ambition of this dissertation, it is still the most logical term to use in social science, and more importantly reveals a logical research model with a dependent variable (public credibility) and several explanatory variables.

<sup>14</sup> Niklas Luhmann (2000) in *The Reality of the mass media*: “Whatever we know about our society, even about the world we live in, we know it through the mass media”.

<sup>15</sup> See literature on media logic in the Netherlands by Van Ginneken (1999: 337-340); Elchardus (2002); Ringeling (2004); Brants & Van Praag (2006); and Vliegenthart, R. (2012).

manipulate the (written) press, and create the perception that a cabinet minister may be a good policy maker, even when he or she is not.

*Box 6. The Drama Democracy.* In the VPRO *Tegenlicht* Documentary titled *Drama Democratie, de Reality Check*, Stephen Coleman explains, “when we see a cabinet minister smiling on TV, we ask ourselves: is it an opportunist smile or is it a real smile? We will never be able to make perfect judgments about these things.”<sup>16</sup> Coleman (2010, 2013)<sup>17</sup> believes that television has trained citizens to become more sophisticated reviewers of other people’s credibility, giving citizens what psychologists call a “parasocial connection with the world.” Mass media connects them to cabinet ministers who are not, nor have ever been, in their physical presence. The parasocial connection works like an actual connection because citizens can learn a great deal about cabinet ministers through news media. Their flaws, insecurities, and other details about their professional and personal lives are all made public.

Since credibility is an important criterion for assessing and judging others, and since the written press is an important source through which citizens receive the information upon which they base those assessments and judgments, part III features what was said in the written press about the policies, operational performance, and actions of cabinet ministers in terms of negative and positive media appearance. This knowledge of media appearance helps provide an understanding of why the HPC cabinet ministers were more successful at attaining credibility

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<sup>16</sup> See also Coleman S; Coleman S; Blumler JG (2009) *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Coleman S (2013) *How Voters Feel*. New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [In preparation]; Coleman S (2010) *Leaders in the Living Room—the Prime Ministerial Debates of 2010: Evidence, Evaluation and Some Recommendations*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism; Coleman S; Ross K (2010) *The Media and the Public: Them and Us in Media Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell-Wiley.

than the LPC cabinet ministers were. Part III shows that exposure and notoriety, the number of newspaper articles about a cabinet minister, seem more important than the nature of press articles. Since the analysis of positive and negative media appearance does not reveal any patterns with regard to the influence of the content of press articles, additional analyses with more sophisticated methods are required.

Therefore, parts V and VI describe the outcome of an additional study on the same explanatory variable (media appearance) with a different method. This study reveals the communicated personalities of cabinet ministers in order to search for clues demonstrating if and how media appearance and public credibility of cabinet ministers are linked.

This dissertation ultimately aims to test the strength of the following hypothesis: media appearance of cabinet ministers in terms of **negative and positive feedback in headlines of newspaper articles**, and **communicated personalities of cabinet ministers in written media**, matter for the public credibility they are able to attain during their cabinet terms.

*Box 7. Why does this dissertation focus on persons rather than organizations?* Even though Holsteyn (2004) called his article ‘The Netherlands is Not a Person Democracy’,<sup>18</sup> and provided convincing evidence to justify this title, the Dutch democracy is increasingly referred to as a “person democracy”.<sup>19</sup> Dutch elections are linked through terms such as “rat

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<sup>18</sup> Holsteyn van, J.J.M. (2004) Nederland is geen *personendemocratie*. Socialisme en democratie, 61 (7-8). pp. 79-83.

<sup>19</sup> In “Platform 7” of the RVD Communication Series, practitioners and researchers reflect on trends in government communication. In 2007, they readily assume that personification in the media is a fact, and discuss why it should be seen as an opportunity instead of a threat to “neutral government communication.” Previously, one of the rules of government communication maintained that “government communication should concern policies and organization, and should not be aimed at personal ‘image building’ of cabinet ministers.” The RVD argues that this rule of government communication is no longer up to date, and urged government communications advisors to embrace the personification trend and focus on helping cabinet ministers to “communicate personal leadership.” Original quote in Dutch: “Overheidscommunicatie moet gaan over beleid en organisatie en wordt niet gericht op persoonlijke ‘imagebuilding’ van bewindspersonen.” Quoted in RVD Academie voor Overheids-communicatie (2007) *De Bewindspersoon als Boegbeeld*. Platform 7, RVD-communicatiereeks. Den Haag.



race” and “horse race” (Van Praag & Brants, 2005; Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2008; Vliegenthart, 2012). Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema & Takens (2009) came to the more nuanced conclusion that some forms of personification in politics do exist. In the meantime, leadership as a field of science has taken on some weight in Dutch academic literature, which in itself implies a growing interest in both the persons who find themselves in leadership positions, and the challenges they face on topics ranging from image building to leadership effectiveness (see Schouw and Tops, 1999; Ringeling, 1999; ‘t Hart, 2000, 2004,<sup>20</sup> and 2008; Te Velde, 2002, Kets de Vries, 2002, Rost van Tonningen, 2002, Peper, 2003; De Beus, 2006).

The second major explanatory variable used to analyze cases of public credibility is **operational performance**. Books such as *Trust* (Fukuyama 1995), *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Nye, Zelikow & King, 1997), *Trusting Politics? Why Would You?* ([title translation by EW] Halman, 2006) and *Why We Hate Politics* (Hay, 2007) all address the relationship between actual governance performance and political trust or credibility of government institutions. Apparently the authors believe one cannot write a book about public trust or credibility without touching on government performance as an explanatory variable.

According to Elchardus & Smits (2002:17) trust could be a direct result of government performance (see also Mishler & Rose, 1997:419, Weatherford, 1989, Levi, 1996:50 and Jadozainsky, 1998). However, they acknowledge that there is a difference between the subjective

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<sup>20</sup>The increased attention given to leadership was noticed by Paul ‘t Hart in 2004 (translation E.W.): “Take a random management magazine about public matters. Odds are that you’ll find loads of quotes that show a quest for leadership” (Original quote in Dutch: “Men neme vervolgens een willekeurig managementtijdschrift voor de publieke sector. Geheid dat het zowel in de redactionele kolommen als in de advertenties bol staat van verlangen naar leiderschap.”) Source: Op zoek naar leiderschap, regeren na de revolutie, ‘t Hart, 2004).

judgment of citizens and the real achievements of government (2002:18/19).<sup>21</sup> Pieterman, Dekker and Elffers (2005) conclude that there is no evidence for a strong relationship between the practical actions of government and public trust expressed by citizens. According to Bouckaert & Van de Walle (2003) “it is not even clear what influences trust in government and whether it actually has to do with government actions”, and “it is difficult to research the relation between good governance and the level of trust.” They argue that in most cases high trust indicates good government, but other variables play a role as well (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003). Hardin (2000) states that trust decreases when governance performance decreases, but more detailed evidence is lacking.

Several inner circle experts who were interviewed for this dissertation, and whose job is to help cabinet ministers become successful policymakers and communicators, believe that citizens remain oblivious to the policy accomplishments of cabinet ministers. Do citizens base their credibility judgments at least partly on the cabinet ministers’ policy accomplishments? On numerous occasions, political institutions and research institutes have published reports in which they assume a relationship between good governance and perceived trustworthiness (see box 8. Examples).

*Box 8. Examples of institutions assuming a relationship between good governance and perceived trustworthiness:* “The ministry of BZK guards the core values of the democracy. BZK stands for good and effective governance and a government citizens can have faith in.”<sup>22</sup> This mission statement suggests that the two concepts of “effective governance” and

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<sup>21</sup> Elchardus and Smits (2002:45) follow Max Weber when they state that trust is attained or lost via a “more or less rational, more or less informed judgement about the performance of political organisations”.

<sup>22</sup> Source: [www.minbzk.nl](http://www.minbzk.nl), March 2013. Original text in Dutch, from [www.minbzk.nl](http://www.minbzk.nl): “Het ministerie van BZK borgt de kernwaarden van de democratie. BZK staat voor een goed en slagvaardig openbaar bestuur en een

“faith in the government” are closely related to one another, and that one might even determine the other. In 2012, the European Parliament expected “that the (...) coherence between external and internal (human rights) policies will be improved, (...) in order to support the political credibility of the European Union.”<sup>23</sup> The European Parliament assumes that there is a relationship between the coherence of certain aspects of policies, and the public credibility of the political institution that is responsible for those policies. Citizens are “better informed and higher educated than ever,” due to which they “expect more from politics and politicians than the latter can ever realize, which (...) inevitably leads to a usually prompt disappointment [on the citizen’s behalf] about what the government has accomplished [and what not].” (SCP, 2012, 331).<sup>24</sup>

Does a government’s failure to perform lead to dissatisfaction among its citizens, and is this feeling generally followed by a decrease of its perceived trustworthiness or public credibility? This assumption was countered by Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2003). The authors provide evidence indicating public trust in government institutions may not be as strongly related to good governance as is generally believed: “Even when trust in government can be measured, it

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*overheid waar burgers op kunnen vertrouwen. BZK draagt eraan bij dat burgers kunnen wonen in betaalbare, veilige en energiezuinige woningen in een buurt waar iedereen meetelt en meedoet en het prettig leven is.”*

<sup>23</sup> Source in Dutch: “Ontwerpsverslag over het jaarverslag over mensenrechten en democratie in de wereld in 2011 en het beleid van de Europese Unie ter zake.” (2012/2145(INI) Committee Foreign Affairs. Author: Leonidas Donskis. Original quote in Dutch: “Het Europees Parlement verwacht dat de COHOM sterker met de Raadswerkgroep Grondrechten (FREMP) zal samenwerken om het vraagstuk van de coherentie tussen het extern en intern mensenrechtenbeleid van de EU aan te kunnen pakken; onderstreept hoe belangrijk coherentie is om te vermijden dat de EU ervan wordt beschuldigd met twee maten te meten, om steun te geven aan de politieke geloofwaardigheid van de Europese Unie.”

<sup>24</sup> SCP (2012, p. 331) *Een beroep op de Burger*. Den Haag. Original quote in Dutch: “Beter geïnformeerd en hoger opgeleid dan ooit verwachten burgers van de politiek en de politici meer dan ooit realiseerbaar zal zijn. Dat leidt onvermijdelijk tot meestal al snelle teleurstelling over wat er dan wel gedaan wordt.”

is not at all clear whether changes in the level of trust are actually influenced by government-related factors.” Knepper and Kortenray (2008), who wrote *The Trust Crisis*, agree with the skeptical approach of Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2003). The authors argue, “the belief of politicians and research institutes in the opinions of ‘regular’ citizens on topics that are difficult to understand even for specialists, is surprising.”<sup>25</sup> They suggest citizens do not know much about the performance of government institutions, and as a result, they could not possibly judge the institutions based upon their governance or performance. Others say government action, in combination with context variables such as demographic characteristics, is one of many explanatory variables of public trust in governments (Dekker, 2001).

When government institutions and research institutes claim, without much further explanation, that performance and credibility are related, while others claim they are not, the question of whether cabinet ministers should deliver better policy results in order to attain higher levels of public credibility remains mostly unanswered. Further research is therefore required in order to determine who is right and who is wrong.

In Part III, inner circle expert opinions about cabinet ministers will be discussed in order to create a first scan of the performance of cabinet ministers. Are the best performing cabinet ministers, according to the inner circle experts, the same ministers as those who attained high levels of public credibility? Or can cabinet ministers attain HPC without convincing the inner circle of policy advisors that they did a good job at the ministry, and vice versa: are there cabinet ministers who failed to attain higher levels of public credibility, but who convinced the inner circle that they excelled at policy making and other elements of a minister’s job?

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<sup>25</sup> S. Knepper; J. Kortenray (2008) **De vertrouwenscrisis**. Meulenhoff, Uitgeverij. Original quote in Dutch: “Even verbazingwekkend is het vertrouwen dat politici en onderzoeksbureaus stellen in het vermogen van ‘gewone’ burgers om keuzen te maken op terreinen die zelfs voor specialisten nauwelijks te overzien zijn”.

As discussed in Part III of this dissertation, “operational performance” is considered an “umbrella variable”. In Parts IV, V and VI, this variable will be divided into two sub-variables for more reliability and validity of the research project. Starting in Part IV, operational performance will be defined as a combination of ministerial style and skill sets, and policy goal realization. The reason why these features of performance make up the explanatory variable “operational performance” surfaced during the pre-research group interviews for this dissertation.<sup>26</sup> When a style and skill assessment validation group was asked when cabinet ministers are successful, their answers varied, but there were two main features all participants in the group believed cabinet ministers should possess: certain skills and the ability to realize policy goals. According to the validation group, cabinet ministers must possess the four following skills: media skills (supporting a public style), political skills (supporting a political style), policy making skills (supporting a rational style) and connective skills (supporting a connective style).

The first sub-variable (ministerial style and skills) will be measured by means of a style and skill assessment survey. Sources are inner circle experts. The second sub-variable (policy goal realization) will be measured by means of desk research on policy goal realization by cabinet ministers. Sources are cabinet Balkenende IV, Court of Audit and Parliament documents.

So, this dissertation aims to test the following hypothesis: **operational performance as defined by inner circle experts**, and performance in terms of **ministerial style and skill** and **policy goal realization** by cabinet ministers matter in terms of the public credibility they are able to attain during their cabinet term.

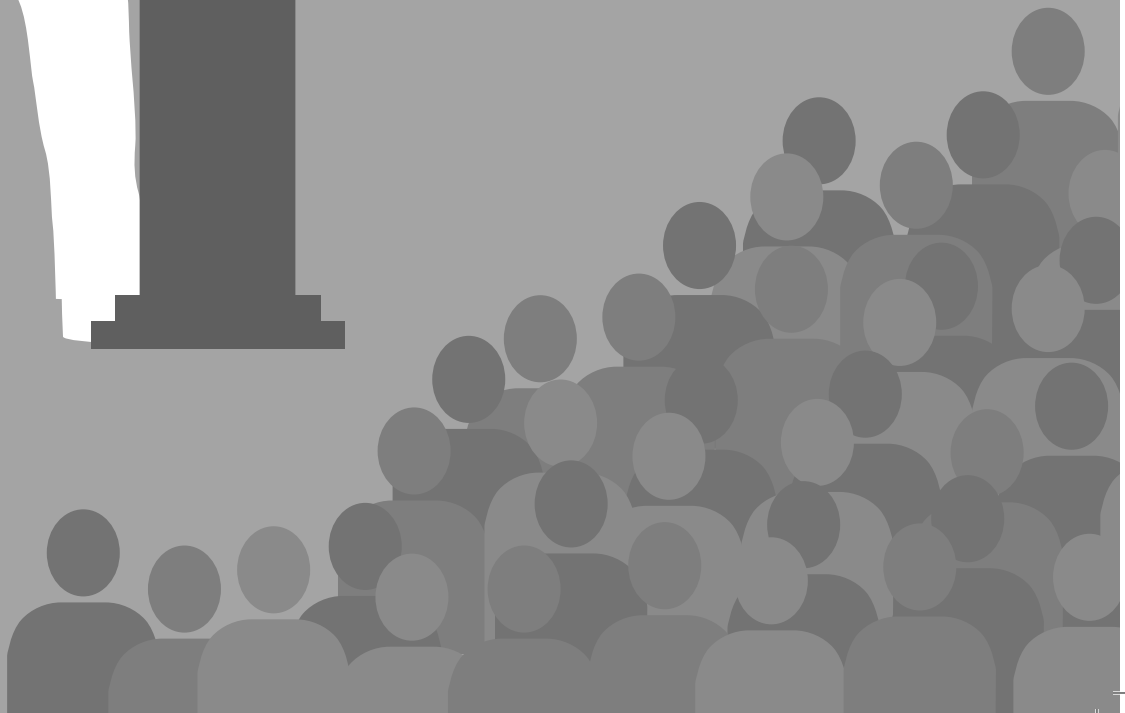
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<sup>26</sup> With the style and skill assessment validation group, see part IV.

# PART 1

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## Qualities of a Higher-Credibility Cabinet Minister





## PART I: QUALITIES OF A HIGHER-CREDIBILITY CABINET MINISTER

The general introduction addressed a quote from the Secretary-General of the Ministry of General Affairs in 2009. The SG implied that understanding what citizens want and communicating in a way that connects with the public requires the special type of knowledge a communications director can share: information on how to communicate with citizens and information about what citizens want from those in charge of the government.

While an experienced member of Parliament confessed to believing that “citizens have no idea which characteristics a cabinet minister needs to have to do his or her job,”<sup>27</sup> several other interviewees described certain features citizens may be looking for in cabinet ministers:

- “Reliability and honesty. Solving problems. Keeping everything together” (ZvW).<sup>28</sup>
- “Promising no more than you can deliver. The Hague should put topics on the agenda that citizens worry about” (JWH).<sup>29</sup>
- “Honesty (making clear what your aim is) and clarity (being able to explain)” (BM).<sup>30</sup>
- “Taking good care of things. Being forward-looking” (MR).<sup>31</sup>
- “Vigor, doing what you said you would do, being honest. Being able to make difficult decisions and sometimes you have to dare to be unpopular” (FJ).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interview WvdC, May 11th, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Betrouwbaarheid en eerlijkheid, probleemoplossend vermogen, de boel bij elkaar houden.”

<sup>29</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Niet meer beloven dan je waar kunt maken. Den Haag moet agenderen waar burgers zich zorgen om maken.”

<sup>30</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Eerlijkheid (duidelijk maken waar je voor staat). Helderheid (kunnen uitleggen).”

<sup>31</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Goed op de zaak passen. Visie op de toekomst.”

<sup>32</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Daadkracht, doen wat je zegt dat je zult doen, eerlijk zijn. Moeilijke beslissingen kunnen nemen en je moet als minister soms ook impopulair durven zijn.”



- “Citizens expect the same as I do...making things happen and limiting bureaucracy, having no pretenses and a lot of knowledge, having authority and the ability to adjust a point of view. Having government experience and mastering the political game” (MLV).<sup>33</sup>
- “Citizens want a cabinet minister who understands what the daily troubles are. He needs to be a team player and have the ability to manage the Ministry (creating understanding, no opponents but supporters)” (RR).<sup>34</sup>
- “Citizens want a cabinet minister to do the right things. He needs to watch his spending, and he needs to solve problems” (JWS).<sup>35</sup>
- “Tough question. Everything citizens know, they know through the press...they do not get to see real performance” (GF).<sup>36</sup>

The overview demonstrates that some inner-circle experts agree on the importance of certain characteristics, including reliability, honesty, financial and personal integrity, and being forward-looking and vigorous. Others believe that citizens look for particular skills in cabinet ministers, such as problem-solving abilities, being a team player, and having the political and leadership skills necessary for successfully managing the ministry. Yet another type of answer refers to qualities that come with age and personality, such as being experienced, authoritative,

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<sup>33</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Precies hetzelfde.”

<sup>34</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Een Minister die begrijpt wat de dagelijkse problemen zijn. Teamplayer. Ambtelijk apparaat kunnen aansturen (begrip, niet tegenstanders maar medestanders.”

<sup>35</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Dat’ie bestuurlijk de goede dingen doet. Hij moet niet teveel geld uitgeven en hij moet problemen oplossen.”

<sup>36</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Lastige vraag. Alles wat burgers weten komt tot ze via de pers. Ik loop al heel lang mee in het wereldje en zie en hoor vaak dingen in de media die gewoon niet waar zijn, die goedkoop zijn, die gemakkelijk zijn. Ze rekenen bewindsliden niet af op hun prestaties. De krant verkoopt een schandaaltje. Als je een belangrijk dossier binnenhaalt, dan wordt er vooral gezegd dat de oppositie tegen was, niemand heeft oog voor de prestatie op zich. Aan de andere kant, televisie is genadeloos. Omdat TV alle zwakke punten blootlegt. In een paar seconden moet je er zijn. Gaat het mis, dan kan dat je jaren achtervolgen.”

and authentic. Are these inner-circle experts correct? Are these the qualities Dutch citizens are looking for in a cabinet minister? The central aim of this section of the dissertation is to discuss which characteristics citizens prefer to see in a cabinet minister. Surveying citizen-respondents about the characteristics they prefer in someone else has been done before in various contexts, and is usually called prototype research. The research discussed here is in accordance with this tradition, as Dutch respondents were asked which characteristics they prefer in someone else—in this case, a cabinet minister.

In this dissertation, the word *prototype*<sup>37</sup> represents the citizen's hopes and expectations concerning the character and personality of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands. A prototype is here defined as "a blueprint of the most preferred characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister that reflects the Dutch citizen's expectations." The prototypical higher-credibility cabinet minister is fictitious, because most likely there are no real cabinet ministers who look, act, and function exactly according to the expectations of Dutch citizens. However, it is useful to research what type of person that exemplary cabinet minister would be, in order to set an example for practitioners and inspire more research in the field, and also as a preparation for further research in Part II of this dissertation, where cabinet ministers will be compared to the prototype by Dutch citizens.

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<sup>37</sup> The word "prototype" is French and comes from the Greek word "prōtōtypon." Its first known use was in 1552 (source: Merriam Webster Dictionary online). The word has several different meanings, the first of which is "an original model on which something is patterned" (Merriam Webster). The second definition comes closer to the way in which the word will be used throughout this book: "an individual that exhibits the essential features of a later type." The English dictionary included the following example: "he is the prototype of a conservative businessman." This shows that not only in social science, but also in regular British and American language, the word "prototype" can be used to refer to a theoretical, exemplary person, possibly a cabinet minister who can be seen as an example to other cabinet ministers.

In Chapter 1, methods of existing prototype research in the Netherlands and abroad will be discussed and reviewed. The existing research shows a variety of options for the design of a survey examining the characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands.

Chapter 2 (methods and instruments) discusses empirical methods and instruments with which characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister, according to Dutch citizens, were measured (from this point on, the survey will be referred to as the credibility survey).

Chapter 3 (empirical findings) discusses the research results of the credibility survey, which is a list of 24 characteristics, in the order of “most important quality of a higher-credibility cabinet minister” to “least important quality of a higher-credibility cabinet minister,” according to Dutch citizens in 2009, 2010, and 2011. Chapter 3 contains an additional discussion of the outcome compared to existing prototype research, and recommendations for election studies.

## **Chapter 1: Existing Empirical Research**

Political psychology, organization psychology, and values studies have produced knowledge about the various sets of characteristics people look for in their leaders. The methodological lessons produced in these fields will help in building a research instrument with which qualities of a higher-credibility cabinet minister can be measured.

First, survey instruments used in the fields of political science and political psychology will be explored. Most of this work has not included questionnaires through which respondents were asked directly which characteristics they look for in politicians or political candidates. However, there is a body of work conducted by political scientists (both in the Netherlands and abroad) who have tried to find the qualities of political candidates that—if present in the politician, according to the voter—may have influenced the vote. Simply put, when many respondents vote for a certain candidate and simultaneously consider this candidate to be honest, political scientists assume that there is a statistic and perhaps causal relationship between the vote and perceived honesty. They then conclude that honesty may be an important quality for political leadership (paragraph 1 and 2).

In paragraph 3, the survey design of prototype research within organization psychology will be discussed. Kouzes and Posner (1993, 2003, 2007) have revealed a body of empirically founded knowledge on “attributes [American] constituents look for and admire in their leaders” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, introduction). Although Kouzes and Posner incidentally generalize their findings toward the feelings of people regarding the preferred type of leadership in general, their data seem to focus mainly on the ideas of employees about the types of managerial leaders they look for within organizations. Their work will inspire the setup of the credibility survey in the next chapter as well.

Each paragraph of Chapter 1 focuses solely on the methodological lessons that can be derived from prototype research conducted around the world.

**International Political Science and Political Psychology.** In political science, attributes people look for in their leaders are called “prototypes.” Prototypes have been defined by Kinder, Peters, Abelson, and Fiske (1980) as “categories people hold about the nature of the world. An ideal presidential prototype in particular consists of the features that citizens believe define an exemplary president (Kinder, Peters, Abelson, and Fiske 1980, see Aldrich, Gronke, and Grynaviski, 2000 p. 5). Aldrich, Gronke, and Grynaviski (2000) state, “Prototypes are evaluative rulers against which presidential candidates and presidents are measured” (p. 3; see also De Vries & De Landtsheer, 2009).

In political science, the instruments used in prototype surveys (revealing attributes, qualities or traits voters look for in politicians) are not as direct as the instruments used in prototype surveys in other fields are. The reason for this inconvenience is that election studies (the main source of quantitative data in political science) usually do not contain questionnaire items about the qualities voters look for in political candidates or politicians. As such items do not exist, more complicated statistical types of analysis<sup>38</sup> are used to reveal knowledge regarding the traits of political candidates that influence the decisions of voters.

The items are usually formulated as follows: “on a scale from 1 to 7, how [trait] do you think candidate X is?” In most election studies, three or four different traits are included. Why the particular traits asked about are included is often unclear; they were usually chosen by researchers many decades ago and retained their form to allow for comparisons over time. In the Netherlands,

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<sup>38</sup>Regression analysis is a statistical technique that shows which attributes (given by the researchers, not chosen by the respondent) influence the vote. Simplified, the logic works as follows: when attributing a certain trait to a politician and voting for that politician correlate so often that it becomes a rule rather than a series of exceptions, a causal relationship is suspected.

there is a reluctance to change them or to add others, for two reasons: Trait sets need to remain constant to build data sets for longitudinal studies, and the items do not attract a great deal of attention from researchers, making any changes or additions seem unnecessary.

Respondents are usually asked to rate each candidate on several different traits. The outcome is used as a variable in the regression analysis that leads to knowledge of prototypes. If, time after time, voters choose to vote for a politician they think of as, for example, an honest and competent politician, then regression outcomes show that it is likely that considering a candidate to be someone who is honest and competent leads to voting for that candidate. Regression analysis enables researchers to combine these variables on the respondent level to study how perceived traits may have influenced the vote.

The fact that regression analysis is needed to reveal a prototype makes matters unnecessarily complicated. Researchers in many countries have added different traits to their election studies, leading to additional difficulties comparing findings internationally. As a result, knowledge on perceived traits that influence the vote can hardly be compared in a valid way.<sup>39</sup>

Another shortcoming of trait research in the context of political science may be the manner in which data are interpreted and published. For example, authors often write about a political candidate being competent and how that affects the decisions of voters. However, election studies only reveal the citizens' perceptions of political character, not a politician's real

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<sup>39</sup> For prototype research, see Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo (2002); Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske (1980); and Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, & Sullivan (1990). American factor- and regression-analysis of election study data shows that American voters typically value the following traits: altruism (versus selfishness), strength of will (versus lack of will power), and trustworthiness (versus untrustworthiness) (Sullivan, Aldrich, Borgida, & Rahn, 1990); competence, integrity, reliability, charisma, and personal attributes (Miller, Wattenberg, & Malunuchuk, 1986); dominance and empathy (empathy containing extraversion and charisma) (Pierce, 1993); competence and leadership (Caprara et al., 2002; Rahn et al., 1990); and dominance, ambition, and extraversion (Immelman, 1996a).

(biographical) character. All researchers and authors should keep in mind that the traits being asked about are only attributed to the candidates by the voters. Therefore, when discussing data, using terms such as “competence-belief” or “perceived competence” as opposed to just “competence” is more precise and will ensure a better interpretation of research findings.<sup>40</sup>

Aside from ensuring a better interpretation and discussion of data, the distinction between perceived traits (a reflection of a political candidate's character in the minds of voters) and biographical traits (the “truth” about a political candidate's character), is important for another reason: biographical political character has been measured. Therefore, in a discussion about characteristics, qualities, or traits of political candidates, a sharp distinction between the perceived character and the actual biographical character of the politician needs to be made. Aside from biographers, only a few scholars have studied, and are continuing to study, political character with a focus on truth-finding. Immelman (2004) and scholars who follow suit use an instrument called the MIDC (Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria)<sup>41</sup> to research the biographical personalities of political leaders (see also Barber, 2008).<sup>42</sup> Scholars who research traits (perceived or biographical) should make perfectly clear whether an article addresses

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<sup>40</sup> A shortcoming of existing research is that the differences between actual character traits (whether the leader is truly honest) and perceived character traits (whether the people think the leader is honest) have not been described sufficiently. After all, a candidate who is perceived by citizens as honest may not be honest at all from a biographical point of view. Regression analyses of national election data show relationships between the citizen’s assessment of a candidate possessing a certain trait (in other words, a perceived trait such as honesty) and the citizen’s decision whether to or not to vote for this person. In other words, the vote is explained by the fact that the citizen/voter thinks the politician has a certain trait. A mistake often made by researchers is to write about a candidate being honest and another candidate being dishonest, instead of one candidate being perceived as honest and the other one being perceived as dishonest. The only group of researchers who do look for real biographical traits as opposed to publicly perceived traits works with the MIDC (Immelman, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> The MIDC will be used in this dissertation as well, although the aim will not be truth-finding (like in Immelman’s research), but image-finding. In other words, the MIDC method will be used to research media appearance in terms of communicated personality patterns of cabinet ministers, not biographical personality patterns of cabinet ministers. This is an uncommon adaptation of the MIDC, to be discussed further in Part IV.

<sup>42</sup> Barber, J. D. (2008). *The presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Longman Classics in Political Science.

perceived traits or biographical traits. Aside from research on biographical traits and perceived traits, there is research examining both. In this case, perceived traits are dependent variables, while biographical traits are explanatory variables. This dissertation is an example of this type of research.<sup>43</sup>

The methodological lesson of this paragraph is that items from election studies are not ideal for the measurement of characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands, because most election study items on traits only ask which characteristics respondents think a candidate embodies, not which characteristics they actually look for in a candidate. In other words, with the existing items in election studies, researchers usually extract a judgment and rarely a prototype (although this has been done a few times; examples will be discussed in the next paragraph).

**Political Psychology in the Netherlands.** In June 2010, Vonk and Brandt (2010) surveyed 2500 respondents with the help of Maurice de Hond.<sup>44</sup> The respondents were asked to select three characteristics out of a list of twelve, for each of the party leaders and also for a fictive “ideal Prime Minister.” They found that the same percentage (55%) of the respondents chose “having integrity” and “bringing stability” as the most important characteristics of a Prime Minister in the Netherlands. 41% chose “creating unity in the cabinet,” 39% wanted a fictional Prime Minister who “thinks mainly about the interests of the country as a whole,” and 35% favored someone who “has authority.”<sup>45</sup> Vonk and Brandt (2010) researched whether

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<sup>43</sup> In this dissertation, the influence of biographical character traits of cabinet ministers (measured by means of in-depth interviews and desk research) on perceived character traits (as a basis of the credibility judgment) will be measured in Parts III, V and VI.

<sup>44</sup> Maurice De Hond is a nationally well-known polltaker in the Netherlands.

<sup>45</sup> Source: [www.volkskrant.nl](http://www.volkskrant.nl), Roos Vonk & Aafje Brandt, ‘*Principes en Babbels*’, 10/09/10. See also <http://www.roosvonk.nl/lijsttrekkers>.



respondents felt that integrity is less important for the ideal Prime Minister than being able to present a political message. According to the researchers, the survey showed evidence of the contrary. “The most important characteristic was integrity (55 percent) (...).”<sup>46</sup> Vonk and Brandt (2010) are among the very few researchers in the history of Dutch political science who have directly asked respondents to select attributes for a prototypical cabinet minister. Unfortunately, Vonk and Brandt (2010) only included one real human characteristic (integrity); their other attributes referred to actions, behaviors, and political styles of Prime Ministers. Most other trait research in the Netherlands does not contain items that directly ask respondents which traits they think are important qualities for politicians. However, the DPES/NKO (Dutch election studies) contain some trait items. The items included in the DPES/NKO will be discussed below.

Usually, one month prior to and one month following every parliamentary election respondents are asked to attribute certain given traits to the most important political candidates on a 5-point or 7-point scale.<sup>47</sup> This enables researchers to detect statistical relationships between perceived traits and the vote. Fortunately, there have also been a few election study questionnaires through which respondents were directly asked which traits they found most important in an imaginary political candidate. These exceptions took place in the Netherlands in 1989, 1994, and 2006.

The DPES/NKO of 1989 contained items in which voters were asked to rate six qualities that might belong to the “ideal politician” on a scale from 1 to 10. Unfortunately, six qualities

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<sup>46</sup> Source: [www.volkskrant.nl](http://www.volkskrant.nl), Roos Vonk & Aafje Brandt, ‘*Principes en Babbels*’, 10/09/10. Original text in Dutch: “Er is dus in meerderheid gekozen voor politici die hun verhaal goed presenteren. Vinden ze integriteit dan minder van belang? Integendeel. In hetzelfde onderzoek werd als eerste gevraagd welke kenmerken de ideale Minister President heeft. Met stip bovenaan stond integriteit (55 procent). Scoring succes kreeg slechts 1 procent”.

<sup>47</sup>Sometimes additional trait-formats are used: in 1994, voters were asked to list the best and the worst characteristics of four party leaders. In 2006, voters were asked to rate the party leaders on a 4-point scale (fully disagree, disagree, agree, fully agree) on three different traits: honest, capable, and boring (there were also items about the voter’s sympathy for party leaders and parties).

may not be sufficient for obtaining a valid result, as respondents may believe that other qualities not on the list are also important for the ideal politician's character. A longer list increases the chances of respondents finding what they want in the character of the ideal politician, which can result in a far more accurate outcome. Methodological lesson number two is that the list of qualities or characteristics respondents can choose from should not be too short.

Furthermore, respondents in 1989 were invited to rate every trait on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 meant "yes, very important," 1 meant "no, not important at all"). Rating six qualities on a scale from 1 to 10 is time consuming, which reduces the number of qualities that can be included. Methodological lesson number three is that it may be better to ask respondents to select a number of qualities from a list (resulting in a data set that contains a "yes" or a "no" for every quality) to skip the time-consuming rating from 1 to 10 and include a longer list of qualities, thereby obtaining a more inclusive research outcome. Table 3 shows the data of the DPES/NKO in 1989.

Table 3

*DPES/NKO 1989: Traits of the Ideal Politician According to Dutch Citizens*

Traits of ideal politician Dutch election studies: DPES/NKO 1989	Yes, very important (9–10) Percentage	No/No opinion (1–5) Percentage
Honest	64.9	2
Leadership Qualities	60.5	1.5
Decisive	49.5	2
Knowledgeable	46.6	1.1

Compassionate	36.1	3.6
Friendly	22.9	11.5

Note: Answering categories 6–10 were positive, while category numbers 1–5 were negative. The percentages in the second column reflect the sum of all percentages of the highest two answering categories (9–10).

Some of the six qualities selected for the 1989 DPES/NKO questionnaire may still require inclusion in new surveys, while other qualities have proved to be less fruitful in surveys that aim to find which qualities respondents are looking for in political candidates. Being honest, decisive, knowledgeable, and compassionate are politically relevant characteristics that respondents might look for in politicians, but the other qualities seem more problematic. The term “leadership qualities” leaves too much room for interpretation: It is unclear what these qualities refer to in the respondent’s mind. For example, they may refer to masculinity, experience, competence, being forward-looking, or inspiring.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the quality of friendliness may be important for a teacher, parent, neighbor, or even a mayor, but in a parliamentarian, friendliness is not likely to be sought after. This is proven by the 1989 DPES/NKO outcome, where friendliness was ranked the least important of all six qualities.

Table 3 shows that over two decades ago, Dutch voters felt that being honest was the most important quality for the ideal politician to possess. Methodological lesson number four is to include all qualities of the 1989 DPES/NKO survey, with the exception of leadership qualities

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<sup>48</sup>Research shows that “leadership” itself is a term most humans associate with strength and masculinity; see Best & Williams, 1990; Broverman et al., 1972; McKee & Sheriffs, 1957.

and friendliness. The trait “leadership qualities” needs to be replaced with more masculine, strong leadership-related traits, in order to determine what the respondents may have had in mind when 60.5% of them answered that leadership qualities were very important for a politician’s character.

Unfortunately, the prototype items were not repeated after 1989 because very few researchers have used the findings in publications ever since.<sup>49</sup> It would have been interesting to see whether and how the “ideal politician” has changed over time. After all, prototypes in the minds of citizens may demonstrate what kind of leadership is desired at particular times. Since 1989, many Dutch researchers have published interesting thoughts and findings about the way political leadership has changed over the years.<sup>50</sup> Methodological lesson number five is to repeat the survey every four or five years over a longer period of time to enable comparisons and build a body of knowledge on the qualities citizens look for in political leaders.

**Organization Psychology.** Within organization (or management) psychology and leadership studies, scholars often separate trait theories from behavioral theories, contingency theories, and transformational theories. These four domains of the study of leadership can be attributed to four generations of scholars, although they strongly overlap and today there are researchers who can be placed in any of the sub-disciplines. Trait studies (the first generation) are about the (perceived and preferred) character of leaders. The second generation of leadership

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<sup>49</sup> Cees Aarts, personal communication, March 6, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> See Albrecht & Schutte 2002; Bekke, 1990; Boin, 2001; Boin, van der Torre, & Hart, 2003; Cliteur, 1998; de Beus, 2001; Elchardus, 2002; Hart, 2000; Hart et al., 2002; Hollander, 1978; Hoogerwerf, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2002; Landsberg, 2001; Peper, 2002; Peper & Dekker, 2003; Ritzén, 1998; Rosenthal, 1984; Rost van Tonningen, 2003; Sorgdrager, 1999; Terpstra, 2002; te Velde, 2002; van der Vlist, 1991; Vonk & Brandt, 2010. For international work on leadership, see Blondel, 1987; Elcock, 2001; Elgie, 1995; Friedrich, 1963; Gardner, 1993; George & George, 1962; Khuruna, 2003; Neustadt, 1990; Scott, 1998; Weber, 1977 (orig 1919).

researchers focuses on behaviors: what leaders do. The third generation of leadership studies focuses on situations and the kind of leadership behaviors those situations ask for (for example, see Wildavsky, 2005). The fourth and last generation of leadership authors focuses on change. Bass (1984), Burns (1977), Gardner (2004), and Wright (1996) consider leaders to be “change agents.”

The research discussed in this dissertation can be categorized as belonging to the first generation of leadership studies: the trait approach. The trait approach can be divided into two different categories. Early trait research focuses on the qualities leaders possess that set them apart from the rest of the people: what makes a leader a leader? Later trait research has shifted toward a focus on the relationship between “constituents” and “leaders” (“leadership is a relationship”; see Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The central question in later trait research has to do with which characteristics people look for in their leaders (the prototype question). Consequently, this dissertation fits into the second category (prototypes) of the first generation (trait research) of leadership studies.

Within the field of organization psychology, the most influential work examining the characteristics that people look for in their leaders was accomplished by Kouzes and Posner. Their books, *The Leadership Challenge* (2007) and *Higher Credibility Leadership: How Leaders Gain and Lose it, Why People Demand It* (1993, 2003), have become international best sellers. Their instrument contains a list of twenty characteristics that is presented to the respondent, who is asked to pick seven of them. The characteristics in the list are all to-the-point and relevant for leadership character. Table 4 shows 20 attributes, which “account for most of the qualities we admire” (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Table 4

*Characteristics of Admired Leaders by Kouzes and Posner (2007)*

Characteristics	U.S. respondents' percentage of people selecting			
	2007 edition	2002 edition	1995 edition	1987 edition
Honest	89	88	88	83
Forward-looking	71	71	75	62
Inspiring	69	65	68	58
Competent	68	66	68	58
Intelligent	48	66	63	58
Fair-minded	39	42	40	43
Straightforward	36	34	33	34
Broad-minded	35	40	40	37
Supportive	35	35	41	32
Dependable	34	33	32	33
Cooperative	25	28	28	25
Courageous	25	20	29	27
Determined	25	24	17	17
Caring	22	20	23	26
Imaginative	17	23	28	34
Mature	15	17	13	23
Ambitious	16	21	13	21
Loyal	18	14	11	11
Self-controlled	10	8	5	13

Independent	4	6	5	10
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The downside of the questionnaire used by Kouzes and Posner is that the respondent does not get a chance to prioritize the seven characteristics in a second questionnaire item. As far as the data on the respondent level reveals, all seven characteristics are considered equally important. If Kouzes and Posner had included a second item, in which the respondent is asked to rank the seven characteristics in the order of most important to least important, their data would have been more precise. Methodological lesson number six is that an additional questionnaire item can help to determine which of the chosen characteristics is the most important one, which is the second most important, and so on.

The formulation of the question is important as well. Whereas the questionnaire item of the DPES/NKO in 1989 (see previous paragraph) was rather simple (“who is the ideal politician?”), the item formulation Kouzes and Posner have been using is far lengthier:

We look for special qualities in our leaders. Our research indicates that the attributes listed below account for most of the qualities we admire. From this list of 20 attributes, please select the seven that you most look for and admire in a leader, that is, someone whose direction you would willingly follow. (Kouzes & Posner, 2008)<sup>51</sup>

Although the elaborate character of their item formulation was most likely meant to ensure a precise understanding of the question, the item formulation contains three questions instead of one, which could technically cause problems in terms of validity and reliability when interpretation of the data takes place. After all, it is not entirely clear whether they have

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<sup>51</sup> The 20 attributes are: ambitious, broad-minded; caring; competent; cooperative, courageous, dependable, determined; fair-minded; forward-looking; honest; imaginative; independent; inspiring; intelligent; loyal; mature; self-controlled; straightforward; and supportive.

measured which attributes constituents look for in a leader, which attributes they admire in a leader, or which attributes they need to see in a leader before they decide to willingly follow him or her.

Kouzes and Posner (1993, 2003, 2007) argue that no leader (public or private, in politics or business) can survive without credibility, because leaders need others to believe in them. Constituents will only give the leader “credit” if they trust the person to handle his or her mandate well. For the relevant organization to function properly, constituents need to be convinced that their leader will take care of their needs in a proper and honest manner. Since credibility is such an important part of Kouzes and Posner’s theory, maybe their research design would benefit from an item formulation that contains the term, such as: “please pick seven attributes you look for in a higher credibility leader.” Methodological lesson number seven is to increase research validity and reliability by using the proper terminology in the questionnaire item.

A summary of the discussion of prototype research around the world, as discussed in the three previous paragraphs, is shown below in Table 5.

Table 5

*A Summary of the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Discussed Surveys*

Item type	K & P characteristics of admired leaders	Dutch election studies: political qualities
List of attributes or scale per attribute	List: 20 attributes, pick 7	Rate: 6 attributes on a scale 1–10
Number of attributes &	High: more accurate	Low: less accurate



accuracy		
Precision on attribute level	Attributes “not mentioned” are considered “not valued”: less precise.	Each attribute is rated: outcome on attribute level is precise.

**A Review of Existing Empirical Research in the Netherlands: The Cynicism Scale.** The cynicism scale will be discussed here for three reasons. First, the scale reveals a few additional methodological lessons, as will be explained below. Second, the scale reveals interesting knowledge content. It shows what is generally understood as “not done” when it comes to political character. The third reason the cynicism scale will be discussed in this paragraph is that the data offer knowledge regarding the percentage of Dutch citizens who believe in the worst-case scenario when it comes to political character. This can help with interpreting data regarding the characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. After all, asking citizens what the character of a prototypical higher-credibility cabinet minister looks like offers little knowledge without any real idea of the extent to which citizens believe politicians can have good (positive) characters at all.

What is cynicism? Based on decades of research and data gathered through the use of the cynicism scale of the Dutch election studies (DPES/NKO), Schyns, Nuus and Dekker (2004, p.3) came up with the following definition:<sup>52</sup> “political cynicism is an attitude that reflects the belief

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<sup>52</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politiek-cynisme>. The authors show here is no widely accepted and copied definition of political cynicism; the term is interpreted differently around the world. According to Dekker et al. (2005), political cynicism is often compared to political distrust or skepticism. They disagree: “cynicism implies a deeply rooted resentment rather than a mild distrust.” Dekker et al. (2005) have made up their own definition, which contains three ingredients: 1. The cynical person (a citizen or a politician); 2. The object of cynicism (Dekker et al. (2005): “the entire political domain, including politicians, political institutions like the Parliament, political parties and the political

that politicians, political institutions and/or the political system in general, are incompetent and inherently bad”<sup>53</sup> (p. 3).

In the past decade, DPES/NKO researchers measured political cynicism among Dutch citizens in 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2010. The DPES/NKO works with three cynicism statements. Respondents are asked to rate these statements on a four-point scale using the following categories: “totally agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “totally disagree.” With this four-point scale the DPES/NKO “forces” respondents to provide an answer; there is no fifth option allowing them to assert that they neither agree nor disagree with an item.

The support of Dutch citizens for the following statements was measured in 1977, 1981, 1986, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2010:

- Although they know better, politicians promise more than they can deliver.<sup>54</sup>
- Cabinet ministers and state secretaries are primarily concerned about their personal interests.<sup>55</sup>

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system in general”; and 3. The character of political cynicism (Dekker et al. (2005): “political cynicism is an attitude towards politicians. Cynical people do not believe that politicians can do good, nor are good”.

<sup>53</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politiek-cynisme>. Original text in Dutch: “Politiek cynisme is een houding van een individu die bestaat uit de overtuiging dat politici, politieke instituties en/of het politieke systeem als een geheel, incompetent en inherent slecht zijn.”

<sup>54</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politiek-cynisme>. Original text in Dutch: “Tegen beter weten in beloven politici meer dan ze kunnen waarmaken.” Schyns et al. (2004) state that “it is doubtful whether the first statement measures cynicism, because politicians [in the Netherlands] are bound to make compromises because that is how a [multi-party] coalition system works”. Original text in Dutch: “Het is twijfelachtig of de eerste stelling wel cynisme meet, omdat politici nu eenmaal concessies moeten doen in het Nederlandse coalitiestelsel.”

<sup>55</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politiek-cynisme>. Original text in Dutch: “Ministers en staatssecretarissen zijn vooral op hun eigen belang uit.” According to Dekker et al. “The second statement is not perfect either. Following their own interest is not always a bad thing for a politician to do. The individual interest is possibly linked to the interest of the people who voted for the politician”. Original text in Dutch: “Ook op de tweede stelling is het een en ander aan te merken. Het is niet per definitie een slechte zaak dat een politicus met het eigenbelang rekening houdt. Dat eigen belang kan heel goed ook het belang van zijn of haar achterban zijn.”

- One is more likely to become a member of parliament because of one's political friends than because of one's skills.<sup>56</sup>

These items reveal the extent to which citizens believe politicians are greedy and immoral. In 2006, 83.7% of the respondents thought that “although they know better, politicians promise more than they can deliver.” In the same year, 34.5% of the respondents thought that cabinet ministers and state secretaries are primarily concerned with their personal interests. 52.5% disagreed with the statement. 38.5% of Dutch citizens agreed with the third and last cynicism statement. This is the statement that reflects cynicism as defined by Dekker et al. (2005).<sup>57</sup>

The release of data concerning cynical attitudes among citizens in the Netherlands has often led to alarming newspaper articles about the state of political leadership in the Netherlands. In 2010, a popular newspaper even published an article stating that political leadership in the Netherlands is “in severe crisis.”<sup>58</sup>

The value and impact of the international cynicism items are high. The formulation of the items has been the same since 1977, which enables researchers to make data comparisons over time. Could the cynicism scale be called a prototype of the attributes citizens do *not look for* in politicians? Does the cynicism scale represent a prototype of a lower public credibility politician instead of a higher public credibility one? No, empirical cynicism research has little to do with

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<sup>56</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politik-cynisme>. Original text in Dutch: “Kamerlid word je eerder door je politieke vrienden dan door je bekwaamheden.” Dekker et al. state: “[contrary to the first two statements], the third statement (...) reflects cynicism because it concerns [the politician's] integrity and competences”. Original text in Dutch: “De derde stelling, dat je eerder Kamerlid wordt door je politieke vrienden dan door je bekwaamheden, geeft wel iets weer van cynisme omdat zij iets zegt over integriteit en competentie.”

<sup>57</sup> Dekker, Nuus, Schyns *Politiek Cynisme* [web article]. Published May 1st 2005, from <http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/politiek-cynisme>.

<sup>58</sup> An example: ‘Stuurloos dobberen’, Volkskrant (2010, Feb 27) *Katern*, 4, 29.

prototypes, because respondents were not asked which characteristics they look for—or in this case, do not look for—in politicians. Information about the qualities citizens do not look for in politicians was provided in advance by the survey contributors.

From a prototype-research perspective, a survey regarding the image of politics and politicians in the minds of citizens begins with the question of what a good or bad image is, exactly. Instead of assuming that citizens with cynical values find “promising more than what you deliver” to be the worst quality in a politician’s character, the survey could openly ask respondents first. This would make the survey more reliable and informative, although still incomplete. It would show politicians “what not to do,” “who not to be,” and “how not to appear” in seeking election. It would still not provide any information on “what to do,” “who to be,” and “how to appear.”

The data set discussed in the next chapter of this section does only the latter. Researching “what not to do” requires an entire new (recommended) research project. The knowledge gained from a project like this would be educational for politicians and everyone who works with them, and could provide them with knowledge not only with regards to what citizens want (discussed in this dissertation), but also with regards to what they do not want: which reported behaviors would cause harm to a politician’s image.

The longitudinal survey recommended here would include:

- One item set about the characteristics voters or citizens look for in politicians or cabinet ministers;
- One item set about the extent to which voters or citizens believe the current politicians or cabinet ministers embody these preferred characteristics;
- One item set about the least favored characteristics of politicians or cabinet

ministers;

- One item set about the extent to which voters or citizens believe the current politicians or cabinet ministers embody these bad characteristics.

Only by incorporating these item sets into (election) surveys can a complete diagnosis of the state of citizenship and leadership in the Netherlands be made with precision and accuracy, and only thus can a prescription be given for moving towards a more credible government. In this dissertation, there is only room to discuss the outcome of a survey on numbers 1 and 2 of the above. The outcome will be discussed in part II. Other researchers are invited to research numbers 3 and 4 of the above.

Furthermore, the “SSN” survey of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) has asked respondents whether they agreed with the statement that “we need fewer regulations and institutions and more brave, indefatigable and devoted leaders in whom we can have trust.”<sup>59</sup> In 2000, the percentage of people agreeing was 33, and since 2004 this percentage has stabilized at approximately 55-60%. In other words: the support of Dutch citizens support for the statement regarding regulations, institutions, and leadership doubled. However, the survey question has one major flaw: it remains unclear whether respondents responded to the first part of the statement (they believe that we need fewer regulations and institutions), the second part (they value brave, indefatigable, and devoted leaders), or the third part (they value leaders in whom they can have trust). The findings are not worth much without additional research and there is little reason to keep this item in the SSN survey in its original form.<sup>60</sup> It would be a valuable set of items if the three parts of the sentence were to be itemized individually.

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<sup>59</sup> SCP, *The Social State of the Netherlands (De Sociale Staat van Nederland)*, 2009, p. 250.

<sup>60</sup> SCP, 2009, p. 413: “Het is niet uit te maken in hoeverre de toegenomen steun voor de stelling voortkomt uit een sterker verlangen naar leiderschap, een sterkere afkeer van bureaucratische wetten en instellingen, of uit een

**Conclusions.** So far, existing empirical research around the world and in the Netherlands has been of little help in answering the central research question. Additional empirical research is required to measure what Dutch citizens look for in cabinet ministers. However, reviewing the existing research has provided seven methodological lessons that can be used in the next chapter, where the design of the credibility survey will be discussed.

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afnemende gevoeligheid voor de autoritaire toon van de formulering. (...) Waarschijnlijk komen de voorkeuren voor meer bevolkingsinvloed en voor sterke leiders voor een deel beide voort uit (populistisch?) wantrouwen tegenover het bestaande systeem en de zittende politici.”

The SCP concludes that there is a general desire for more democracy and strong leaders, which is false. Such a statement should not be made based upon the data, because respondents could have reacted to either one of the parts of the statements, two of them, or all of them. In its current form, the item should not be used for any kind of analysis.

## Chapter 2: Methods and Instruments

This chapter discusses the methods and instruments used to answer the first research question of this dissertation: Which qualities do Dutch citizens look for in a higher-credibility cabinet minister? To determine which characteristics Dutch citizens look for in their cabinet ministers, a survey questionnaire is required. The questionnaire items will be discussed in the first paragraph. The second paragraph addresses panel specifications, followed by a description of the measurement dates.

**Questionnaire Items.** A questionnaire that combines methodological lessons and avoids all shortcomings of existing prototype questionnaires:

- distracts opinions about fictional, “ideal” leadership, not an existing person in a leadership position;
- has a longer list of characteristics respondents can choose from, not a short one (20 rather than 6);
- asks respondents to pick a number of characteristics, rather than to rate every characteristic on a scale from 1 to 10;
- includes feminine, soft leadership characteristics as well as more masculine, strong leadership-related characteristics;
- will be administered several times to enable comparisons over time and to strengthen the data;
- contains an additional questionnaire item that helps to create a more precise research outcome; and
- contains a question that is simple and to-the-point in order to obtain a valid outcome that can only be interpreted one way.

When the design of the following questionnaire items was established in 2008, all of the methodological lessons above were taken into account (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire items in Dutch and English).<sup>61</sup>

Table 6

*Questionnaire Item 1*

Which characteristics are those of a higher-credibility cabinet minister? A higher-credibility cabinet minister is:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Reliable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supportive
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sympathetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Broad-minded
<input type="checkbox"/>	Honest	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intelligent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Competent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Direct
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooperative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Courageous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determined
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loyal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Forward-looking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Independent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspiring	<input type="checkbox"/>	Experienced
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fair-minded	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disciplined
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dedicated/Devoted	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goal-minded

<sup>61</sup> The appendices are available upon request via [evawisse@yahoo.com](mailto:evawisse@yahoo.com).



The attributes of the table above were randomized.

Table 7

*Questionnaire Item 2*

<p>Item 2. You have picked the five attributes below. Please indicate the importance of each attribute by marking them with the numbers 1 through 5 (1 means most important, 5 means least important).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated/Devoted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fair-minded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Goal-minded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Disciplined</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Innovative</p>
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It is not necessary to randomize the order again at item two, since the attributes were already randomized in the first item.<sup>62</sup>

The first table includes 19 of the 20 characteristics used by Kouzes and Posner (CAL, 2008).<sup>63</sup> Four other attributes were added to the list:

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<sup>62</sup> As advised by the experts at CentERdata, the research institute at Tilburg University that manages the LISS panel surveys.

<sup>63</sup> Kouzes & Posner (2008). Permission given by copyright owner James M. Kouzes. Kouzes and Posner (2008) have defined their attributes as follows: Ambitious (aspiring, hardworking, striving); broad-minded (open-minded-flexible, receptive, tolerant); caring (appreciative, compassionate, concerned, loving, nurturing); competent (capable, proficient, effective, efficient, professional); cooperative (collaborative, team player, responsive); courageous (bold, daring, gutsy); dependable (reliable, conscientious, responsible); determined (dedicated, resolute, persistent, purposeful); fair-minded (just, unprejudiced objective, forgiving, willing to pardon others); forward-looking (visionary, foresighted, concerned about the future, sense of direction); honest (truthful, has integrity, reliable, has character); imaginative (creative, innovative, curious); independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-confident); inspiring (uplifting, enthusiastic, energetic, humorous, cheerful, positive about the future); intelligent (bright, thoughtful, intellectual, reflective, logical); loyal (faithful, dutiful, unswerving in allegiance, devoted); mature (experienced, wise, has depth); self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined); straight-forward (direct, candid, forthright) and supportive (helpful, offers assistance, comforting). The only CAL-attribute that was not included is "self-controlled" ("restrained," "self-disciplined"), because it has a different meaning on the work floor (the main environment of leaders examined by the authors) than it does in politics. Losing self-control as a manager is

- Reliability (related to trustworthiness and confidence). Reliability has been an important attribute in the DPES/NKO items for decades, and also foreign election study items.<sup>64</sup>
- Integrity (Kouzes and Posner consider this part of the attribute “honesty”). International research shows that integrity is one of the qualities people may look for in political candidates.<sup>65</sup>
- Dedication. This trait was part of the only survey question regarding qualities people admire in political leaders measured in the Netherlands in the past decade (by the SCP/SSN, see previous chapter).
- Sympathy. This trait is part of the standard items in the DPES/NKO (Dutch election studies).

**Panel Specifications: LISS Panel.** The LISS panel, maintained by CentERdata at Tilburg University, is available for Dutch researchers who wish to carry out quantitative survey research. The panel holds over 8,000 respondents belonging to approximately 5,000 households in the Netherlands. The LISS panel is funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).<sup>66</sup>

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considered bad in most cases, but in politics it is more common and has even proved to be fruitful in the past. In politics, losing one’s temper can be interpreted as a by-product of passion and ambition, and can be viewed as a sign of a person’s devotion to a cause. Besides, a politician who is overly “in control” can be considered rigid and stiff.

<sup>64</sup> Sullivan et al. (1990) identify a set of personality assessment characteristics in politics (political candidates assessed by voters). They found three basic dimensions of personality assessment on which candidates are evaluated; trustworthiness is one of them (trustworthiness versus untrustworthiness, altruism versus selfishness, strength of will versus lack of will power).

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Miller et al. (1986). They found a set of dimensions along which presidential candidates are evaluated by voters: competence, integrity, reliability, charisma, and personal attributes. For research in the Netherlands, see Vonk & Brandt (2010).

<sup>66</sup> “The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) funds thousands of top researchers at universities and institutes and steers the course of Dutch science by means of subsidies and research programmes” ([www.nwo.nl](http://www.nwo.nl)).

In 2009, 2010, and 2011, respondents of the LISS panel were surveyed by means of an Internet questionnaire. At each measurement, respondents had one month (from the first to the last day of the month) to complete one or several sets of items. The software allowed them to take breaks and finish the questionnaire on any day of the month. The survey discussed in this dissertation has an average response of approximately 5,000 respondents. The experts at CentERdata cleaned the raw data of each measurement and delivered them, perfectly prepared, to the researcher's table. Where necessary, CentERdata has modified survey data to make the panel mirror the Dutch citizenry as much as possible. By doing so, they have enabled researchers to make generalizations. Consequently, statements based on the data discussed in this dissertation can be generalized toward the entire population of Dutch citizens.

**Measurement Periods.** The data collection of items one and two described above took place in July 2009, January 2010 (right before the Balkenende IV cabinet resigned), and January 2011 (when a new cabinet had been in office for 6 months). There was a test measurement conducted in January 2009. The test data indicated that respondents thought that being reliable, honest, and competent were the most important characteristics of a good cabinet minister. This test measurement helped to determine which characteristics should be chosen for the assessment part of the questionnaire, which will be discussed in Part II of this dissertation. Also, the January 2009 data were helpful in creating an initial concept of the characteristics that needed to be included in the following measurements of July 2009 and January 2010. The January 2009 measurement showed that respondents had no problem with selecting attributes out of a list of 10. As a result, the list of attributes was extended in July 2009 to include a total of 24 attributes. Also, respondents frequently used the "other-attribute" option. This is the option that enables

respondents to type in an additional attribute not found on the list. Their suggestions were taken into account when the list was extended to 24 characteristics for all of the following measurements.

### **Chapter 3: Credibility Survey: Basic Empirical Findings**

In this chapter, the data collected from the two questionnaire items of the credibility survey will be discussed. Paragraph one describes the outcome of the first item, in which respondents were asked to indicate the character of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Paragraph two describes the outcome of the second item, in which respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each of the previously chosen attributes. In paragraph three, special attention will be given to the attribute of sympathy, to discuss how important sympathy is for a higher-credibility cabinet minister, according to the respondents of the LISS panel, and what that possibly means for the DPES/NKO items.

#### **Outcome of the First Item—Characteristics of a Higher-Credibility Cabinet**

**Minister.** The aim of the first item of the credibility questionnaire is to determine which characteristics of a cabinet minister are most valued by respondents. The first two or three attributes in the ranking form the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands. Those attributes have shown to be reliability, honesty, and competence.

Less important for a higher-credibility cabinet minister according to the respondents, but still in the top half of the ranking, are being fair-minded, having integrity, being involved, being intelligent, and being forward-looking. The least important characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister are being supportive, loyal, innovative, ambitious, straightforward, disciplined, and sympathetic (see Table 8). This means that most respondents value a reliable, honest, and competent cabinet minister; consequently, to increase their credibility levels, cabinet ministers should work on ways to show the public that they possess these qualities.

Table 8

*Characteristics of a Higher-credibility Cabinet Minister, According to Citizens in the Netherlands in July 2009, January 2010, and January 2011*

	Jul 2009	Jan 2010	Jan 2011
Reliable	66.7	66.2	65.3
Honest	54.7	53.4	49
Competent	47.4	47.2	47.5
Fair-minded	37.8	38.3	37.2
Integrity	28.7	30.2	30
Involved	28.7	28.2	27.6
Intelligent	28.3	30.4	31.9
Forward-looking	26	25.3	29.4
Goal-minded	22.9	21.6	20.1
Cooperative	17.6	18.1	20.6
Determined	15.9	17.8	15.1
Experienced	15.6	16.4	14.7
Devoted/Dedicated	14	13.8	13.5
Broad-minded	13.6	13.8	15.8
Inspiring	13.2	12.5	13.8
Independent	11.7	12.1	11.6
Sympathetic	11.3	11.9	12.4
Courageous	8.6	8.4	7.4
Disciplined	8.3	8.1	7.7

Straightforward/Direct	7.7	6.8	6.3
Ambitious	7.2	6.9	8.1
Innovative	6	5.1	6.6
Loyal	4.9	5.2	5.6
Supportive	2.3	1.8	1.9

The first three attributes (reliable, honest, and competent) are part of the character and behavior of a higher-credibility cabinet minister according to over 60% (for reliable), approximately 50% (for honest), and over 47% (for competent) of the respondents. The fourth attribute in the ranking, being fair-minded,<sup>67</sup> was only chosen by approximately 38% of the respondents. Therefore, the first three attributes, not the first four, will be considered those possessed by the Dutch “prototype” of a higher-credibility cabinet minister.

In January 2011, being intelligent and being forward-looking became more important characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Being forward-looking, one of the most important leadership attributes in the American research of Kouzes and Posner (2007), went from being supported by 25.3% of respondents to 29.4%. Whether this indicates a trend cannot be determined here, but it would be interesting to monitor the importance placed on this attribute by citizens to determine whether the perceived trait of being forward-looking is becoming more important for politicians over time. The same goes for the attribute of intelligence (support for this attribute went from 28.3% in 2009 to 31.9% in 2011). An interesting question would be whether the increased attention given to forward-looking and intelligent cabinet ministers in

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<sup>67</sup> In Dutch: *Rechtvaardig*.

2011 has something to do with the change of cabinet from Balkenende IV to Rutte I following the parliamentary elections in 2010.

**Outcome of the Second Item—Narrowing Down the Prototype.** Item 2 follows up Item 1. After respondents selected five attributes contributing to a cabinet minister’s higher credibility character, Item 2 showed these attributes and asked respondents to apply numbers one through five to each of them (with one meaning “most important” and five meaning “least important”).

Table 9 shows the outcome of Item 2 for the five most picked characteristics from Item 1. In choosing the five most popular characteristics, the respondents of the LISS panel kept the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands intact: Reliability, honesty, and competence were still considered the most important characteristics.

Table 9

*Outcome of Item 2 for the Five Most Picked Characteristics from Item 1*

Item 2. You have picked the five attributes below. Please indicate the importance of each attribute by adding the numbers 1 through 5 (1 means most important, 5 means least important).

	Reliable	Honest	Competent	Integrity	Fair-minded
Jul-09	60.9	62.2	53.8	46.8	38.1
Jan-10	60.3	61.5	54.2	46	38.7
Jan-11	60.5	60.2	54.4	48.4	36.9

*Note:* Percentages are the sum of answering categories 1 and 2 (“most important” and “important”).

The data for Item 1 (described in the previous paragraph) indicate that in 2009, 2010, and 2011, being reliable was considered the most important characteristic of a higher-credibility



cabinet minister. However, when asked to place the previously chosen items in a certain order in Item 2, honesty ends up at number one more often than reliability in the 2009 and 2010 measurements.

Almost one third (32.7%) of the respondents who selected reliability as one of the key attributes of being a higher-credibility cabinet minister ranked this characteristic as number one or two (out of five). In 2009 and 2010, honesty was considered the first or second most important characteristic of a higher-credibility cabinet minister by a slightly higher percentage of respondents (38.5%). In general, reliability and honesty are considered by far the two most important characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister according to the respondents in 2009, 2010, and 2011, followed by competence.

During the government of the new Rutte I cabinet, honesty became a slightly less important ingredient in the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Table 9 (the results of item two) shows that honesty, as an attribute of a higher-credibility cabinet minister, lost its number one position.

Competence, the third most important characteristic according to the Item 1 data (most chosen out of 24) is considered the number one quality of a higher-credibility cabinet minister by 30.3% of the respondents. Competence remains at number three.

In sum, LISS panel respondents selected reliability, honesty, and competence most frequently, when asked which five of the 24 characteristics were most important for a higher-credibility cabinet minister. When asked to rank them in order of “most important” to “least important,” the same three characteristics came up.

Furthermore, the data of Item 2 have shown that the three characteristics of reliability, honesty, and competence need to be distinguished from all of the other most picked

characteristics in Item 1, because beginning with the fourth characteristic (being fair-minded), the attributes were found to be of much less importance in Item 2 than the first three characteristics of reliability, honesty, and competence. Therefore, public credibility has been defined by LISS panel respondents as being a combination of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence. Consequently, a cabinet minister who is perceived as reliable, honest, and competent by LISS panel respondents will be considered a higher-credibility cabinet minister.

**Recommendations for Election Studies.** A few standard items in the DPES/NKO measurements are interesting to take a further look at, with the above-discussed definition of the credibility prototype in mind. Which items regarding the traits of politicians can be considered part of the DPES/NKO? First of all, every DPES/NKO measurement contains data about the faith of respondents in party leaders as Prime Minister. Second, every election study data set includes items about the sympathy respondents feel for party leaders. The most recent data sets including these items were established in 2002, 2006, and 2010. Third, several other trait items regarding the perceived character of political candidates have been part of the DPES/NKO questionnaires in 1981, 1989, 1994, and 2006. These items extract a judgment from the respondent on a 4-point scale about the perceived honesty and competence of political candidates, as well as the degree to which the respondent thinks the candidate is boring. The DPES/NKO team did not include these items in the 2010 questionnaire because the 2006 results had not yet been used by researchers for publications.<sup>68</sup>

The LISS panel data described above have shown that respondents think that reliability, honesty, and competence are the most important characteristics of a cabinet minister in the

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<sup>68</sup> Personal communication with Kees Aarts, Professor at Twente University and chairman of DPES/NKO, July 1, 2010.

Netherlands. Assuming that cabinet ministers and party leaders are all considered “politicians” and thus considered more or less the same, the LISS panel data can be used to review the DPES/NKO items from a new perspective: Which traits should be included in future DPES/NKO measurements, and which traits should be reconsidered going forward?

Existing DPES/NKO items that include important qualities of Dutch politicians (including political candidates, party leaders, and cabinet ministers), according to respondents, are the “faith in” and the honesty and competence items. The “faith in” items relate closely to the attribute of reliability, which is the most important quality of a higher-credibility cabinet minister, according to the LISS panel respondents. Although there is a difference between having faith in someone and believing the person is reliable, the difference is rather small. The continuity of DPES/NKO items over time is important, so there is no good reason to change the “faith in” items. The honesty and competence items were verified by the LISS panel respondents, because they represent the second and third most important qualities of a higher-credibility cabinet minister.

Existing DPES/NKO items that do not include important qualities of Dutch politicians are those pertaining to sympathy. Being sympathetic (in Dutch: *sympathiek*) was added to the list of 24 potentially important attributes of a higher-credibility cabinet minister, according to respondents, because it has been part of the DPES/NKO questionnaire for several decades. It has been assumed that a feeling of sympathy for a politician may influence election outcomes (CBS, 1991a; van Holsteyn, 2004, pp. 7–8; van Holsteyn, Irwin, & van der Eijk, 1987, pp. 91–107).

However, when asked which characteristics matter most in terms of being a higher-credibility cabinet minister, Dutch respondents do not value sympathy to a substantial degree. Being sympathetic was only chosen by approximately 11.5% of the respondents, on average, in

2009 and 2010. In January 2011, 12.4% of the respondents added this attribute to the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. *Sympathiek* ends up being number 16 in the ranking of the most valued characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in Item 1. From this point of view, it is unlikely that a feeling of sympathy for a politician (or a lack thereof) will play a role in election outcomes in the same way that (a lack of) perceived reliability, honesty, or competence would.

For Item 2, 46.7% of the respondents who included sympathy in their prototype of five characteristics (which is 5.4% of all Dutch respondents<sup>69</sup>), rank sympathy fifth, which means “least important.” On average (of all three measurements), only 11% of the respondents who chose the characteristic in Item 1 (that is, 1.3% of all respondents) feel that sympathy is the number one characteristic of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. None of the other characteristics ends up fifth in the ranking as often as *sympathiek* does. In other words, being *sympathiek* is considered by respondents as a rather unimportant attribute in terms of being a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Those who preferred it only added it as an extra characteristic after other, more important characteristics.

Table 10

*Data of Item 2*

Item 2	“ <i>Sympathiek</i> ” (sympathetic)		
	2009	2010	2011
Most important	11.5	12.8	8.3
2	9.3	8.9	11.1
3	13.3	13.1	11.7

<sup>69</sup> 46.7% of 11.5% = 5.4%.

4	19.2	18.2	19.5
Least important	46.7	47.1	49.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: After choosing *sympathiek* as one of the five characteristics of a higher-credibility cabinet minister in item 1, respondents were asked to place the characteristics in the correct order of importance in Item 2 (from 1, “most important,” to 5, “least important”).

The outcome of the data of Item 1 and 2 indicates that there is very little reason to continue measuring the perceived sympathy of political candidates in DPES/NKO items. The data of Item 1 and 2 with regard to sympathy have shown that citizens and voters rarely assess, evaluate, or judge the credibility of politicians with sympathy in mind. The only reason to continue measuring the voter’s consideration of sympathy in Dutch politicians has little to do with the importance of sympathy itself, but rather with the importance of continuous measurements of the same questionnaire items for longitudinal purposes.

Based on the LISS data, it is recommended that DPES/NKO researchers look into the possibility of measuring the variables chosen to be part of the prototype, as discussed here (reliable: *betrouwbaar*, honest: *eerlijk*, and competent: *bekwaam*) at every election.

**Final Remarks on the Credibility Prototype.** Chapter 3 has discussed the basic empirical findings of Item 1 and Item 2 of the Dutch prototype questionnaire. It turns out that Dutch citizens look first and foremost for reliability, honesty, and competence in a cabinet minister. This prototype remained constant in 2009, 2010, and 2011, even when a different cabinet took over in 2010. Since four survey measurements took place over a period of 3 years, the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister is more reliable than are most other findings regarding the prototypes of politicians. When aiming to capture the hearts and minds of most citizens, spin-doctors, cabinet ministers, and their advisers should focus on magnifying these perceived traits, rather than other characteristics. Additionally, some exceptions to the general prototype of a cabinet minister have been discussed in Appendix 2:<sup>70</sup> Older respondents prefer competence more than younger respondents (.180), more highly educated respondents have a preference for a cabinet minister who is inspiring (.142), and integrity is valued especially by those who are older and more highly educated (.149, .211), and by those with a higher income (.205). When cabinet ministers want to appeal to certain groups, they may be more successful if they take the background characteristics of the people in their audience into account.

Part I has contributed to the national and international debate regarding the characteristics citizens look for and admire in those responsible for the national administration. Kouzes and Posner (2003, 2007) were partially correct when they stated that constituents around the world are looking for leaders who are first and foremost honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. Two out of those four characteristics are also found in the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister, according to Dutch citizens. On the other hand, their theory requires an amendment: Not all constituents in all countries, in all types of leadership relationships, want

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<sup>70</sup> The appendices are available upon request via [evawisse@yahoo.com](mailto:evawisse@yahoo.com).

all types of leaders to be first and foremost forward-looking and inspiring. After all, these characteristics ended up much lower in the rankings created by the LISS panel respondents.

Also, Part I has contributed to the debate about “hating politics” (see Hay, 2007) and the citizens’ disaffection with politicians and government institutions. By researching what citizens (the “demand side,” see Hay, 2007) want from the supply side, we have provided requirements for the relationship between the cabinet and citizens, from a positive angle. After all, those who want to work on building their public credibility can do so, because now it is more clear what it is that citizens want from cabinet ministers.

In Part II, the general Dutch prototype will be used to ask LISS panel respondents to judge cabinet ministers on their public credibility (a combination of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence). The respondents will be asked to compare each cabinet minister of the Balkenende IV cabinet to the prototype. In other words, Part II will reveal which cabinet ministers are considered most reliable, honest, and competent by Dutch citizens, which creates the foundation for additional analyses in search of explanatory variables of public credibility in action, in Parts III, IV, V and VI.

# PART 2

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## Measuring Credibility Methods, Results, and Selection







## **PART II: MEASURING CREDIBILITY—METHODS, RESULTS, AND CASE SELECTION FOR EXPLANATORY RESEARCH**

The public credibility levels of sixteen cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet were measured by a LISS panel survey. The results of this survey will be discussed throughout part II. Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA) led his fourth cabinet from February 2007 through February 2010 and included cabinet ministers affiliated with CDA (Christian democrats), PvdA (labor) and CU (Christen Unie). The cabinet resigned after three years after a cabinet crisis about the future efforts of Dutch military troops in Afghanistan after the summer of 2010.

When Mark Rutte, leader of the liberal party (VVD) won the elections in 2010, he formed a new cabinet with CDA and replaced Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende.

In 2009 and 2010, the LISS panel respondents were asked whether they recognized each of the cabinet ministers, followed by questions on whether the cabinet minister appeared reliable, honest, competent, and sympathetic to them in the following months:

- January 2009 (Balkenende IV cabinet)
- July 2009 (Balkenende IV cabinet)
- January 2010 (Balkenende IV cabinet)
- March 2010 (after resignation, about the Balkenende IV cabinet)
- January 2011 (Rutte I cabinet)

Appendix 3 shows the age, gender, background, and political experience for each member of the Balkenende IV cabinet as well as the Rutte I cabinet. Appendix 5 contains portrait pictures of each cabinet minister of the Balkenende IV cabinet.

Surveys in which citizen-respondents were asked how honest, competent, or reliable each politician or cabinet minister was have been organized before, by the DPES/NKO (Dutch

election studies) researchers and also independently by Maurice de Hond, for example.<sup>71</sup>

However, the credibility survey discussed in this dissertation is fundamentally different, because before measuring the respondents' opinions about the perceived characteristics of cabinet ministers, a prototype was defined by the same respondents. Other surveys in the Netherlands where cabinet ministers were judged or assessed by citizens lacked this step: researchers instead of respondents defined which features of cabinet ministers needed to be included in the assessment surveys.

Perceived<sup>72</sup> reliability, honesty, and competence (in other words, public credibility) of cabinet ministers was measured to obtain a better understanding of the concept of public credibility. After defining what public credibility is according to citizens, as discussed in Part I, cabinet ministers need to be assessed by citizens prior to any attempt being made to understand public credibility, once attained by cabinet ministers. The assessment of cabinet ministers is not the aim of this dissertation; it is a means to an end. After all, without the distinction between higher-, lower-, and medium-credibility cabinet ministers, there can be no understanding of the concept of public credibility in action.

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<sup>71</sup> Maurice De Hond is a nationally well-known polltaker in the Netherlands.

<sup>72</sup> The aim of the credibility assessment is not to reveal the real (historic, empirical, autobiographical) reliability, honesty, and competence of cabinet ministers. The aim is to reveal how respondents have perceived the cabinet ministers in terms of what they find most important: reliability, honesty, and competence. Therefore, the term "perceived," as in "perceived reliability" is important.

## Chapter 4: How to Measure the Credibility of Cabinet Ministers?

The public credibility in terms of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence of sixteen members of the Balkenende IV cabinet was measured four times, thereby making the data set stronger and more interesting, as data can be compared over time. The credibility of the cabinet ministers in the first Rutte cabinet (2010–2012) has also been measured, but only once, in January 2011.

In order to measure public credibility, the three variables perceived reliability, honesty and competence have been combined, resulting in a public credibility scale. A Crohnbach Alpha test has shown that the scale is highly internally consistent, with Alpha values of over 0.90. This means that the three variables perceived reliability, honesty and competence can be used here as a scale to carry out analyses of the public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands, with scientific confidence because when internal consistency is high, the items (variables), are closely related. Acceptable values are normally above 0.70 (Nunelly, 1978).<sup>73</sup>

**Survey Items.** First, respondents of the LISS panel were asked whether they knew the cabinet ministers (Item 1). The following is what the respondents of the LISS panel saw on their computer screens, accompanied by a portrait of the cabinet minister (see Appendix 5), his or her party affiliation, and his or her portfolio (see Appendix 4):

<i>Computer screen 1.</i>		No	Yes
1.	Do you recognize this cabinet minister?	1	2

<sup>73</sup> The average Crohnbach Alpha values for 16 ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV, in January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010, were 0.902, 0.911, 0.915, 0.915 respectively. The average Crohnbach Alpha value for the 12 ministers of the cabinet Rutte I, in January 2011 was 0.910. Although sympathy of cabinet ministers has been measured as well as reliability, honesty and competence, this variable is not part of the credibility scale, and is therefore not included in the scale, nor in the Crohnbach Alpha values.

If the cabinet minister's portrait picture and name do not ring a bell within the respondent's memory, the respondent can answer "no" to the question "do you recognize this cabinet minister?" In that case, the next computer screen will show a new cabinet minister, until all of the cabinet ministers have been shown. If the respondent recognizes the cabinet minister in the picture, the next computer screen displays four more questions about the cabinet minister:

<i>Computer screen 2.</i>					
2.	Does this cabinet minister appear reliable to you?	1	2	3	4
3.	Does this cabinet minister appear honest to you?	1	2	3	4
4.	Does this cabinet minister appear competent to you?	1	2	3	4
5.	Do you feel sympathy for this cabinet minister? <sup>74</sup>	1	2	3	4

These items measure the perceived reliability, honesty, and competence of the cabinet minister. These three assessments together form the credibility judgment. Item 5 measures the sympathy a respondent feels for the cabinet minister, which enables researchers to analyze how public credibility (Item 2 through 4) and sympathy (Item 5) are related to one another. This is interesting because sympathy is an important assessment variable in the DPES/NKO, but has not been validated the way the credibility variables have been validated in Part I of this dissertation (sympathy was not valued as much as the three basic features of a higher-credibility cabinet minister's character).

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<sup>74</sup> Sympathy is not part of the credibility assessment.

**The Panel and Measurement Periods.** The LISS panel is maintained by CentERdata at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. It contains approximately 8,000 constituents of the Netherlands, belonging to approximately 5,000 households. Each of these citizens is regularly asked to take part in a survey. CentERdata ensures that the panel for each project is well-balanced with regard to several background variables, such as gender, age, income, education, country of origin, and marital status. This results in highly representative measurements and the possibility of generalizing the outcome: Based on a LISS panel survey ( $N = >5000$ ), researchers may make valid statements about “the Dutch people” or “Dutch citizens.”

When respondents agree to participate in a particular survey, they can fill out the questions on any computer with Internet access. They can save and pause the survey, close it, and open it again anytime between the first and the last day of the month. Respondents receive a small fee for each completed questionnaire. The LISS panel is financed by NWO, a government agency aiming to stimulate Dutch scientific (international) research, located in The Hague, the Netherlands.

**Stimuli—Information for the Respondent.** Stimuli are pieces of information presented to the respondent during the questionnaire. One stimulus in particular requires some discussion: the portrait picture of the cabinet minister. Studies have shown that a picture and what it portrays (for example, a young or old man or woman, a smile, thick brows, a tie, a big nose, wide eyes, a mustache, and so forth) can make a difference in how respondents react and form their opinions about the person displayed. For example, the visual image of a candidate may influence a voter’s decision (see Mattes et al., 2010, pp. 41–58; Rosenberg, Bohan, McCafferty, & Harris, 1986; Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran, & Le, 1991; Rosenberg & McCafferty, 1987).

Despite the research results that show that the stimulus might influence the respondent's answers (see Appendix 8), the LISS panel respondents need to know which cabinet minister the questions are about, and a name may not be enough to ensure that they do. A test with control groups in the LISS panel was conducted by CentERdata in January 2009. The test demonstrated that it is easier for respondents to recognize a cabinet minister when they see a picture and a name, as opposed to only a name. Showing a picture increased the number of respondents filling out the questionnaire. Also, showing a picture of the cabinet minister makes the outcome more accurate, because it increases the chances of respondents knowing exactly who is being assessed and lowers the chances of respondents being in doubt as to who the targeted cabinet minister is.

An experiment conducted in January 2009 using several different incentives, such as a formal group portrait of all the cabinet ministers together with the Queen on the day of inauguration (February 2007) and an experiment with no picture at all (just the name, political party, and ministry) showed that the influence of the picture on the respondent's assessment of the cabinet ministers was not significant. In other words, the rankings accorded to cabinet ministers as assessed by the group of respondents who saw no picture were the same as the rankings accorded to cabinet ministers as assessed by the group of respondents who saw a portrait picture. The picture increased the acquaintance level of the cabinet minister, not his or her public credibility.<sup>75</sup>

Each respondent received a few pieces of information regarding each of the cabinet ministers, on both their first and second computer screen, along with Items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Except for respondents of the first and second control groups in January 2009, who received

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<sup>75</sup> See also Part V for a discussion on the differences in assessments of cabinet ministers by respondents with and without a portrait picture.

either a group picture displaying the entire cabinet and the Queen, or no picture at all, the following information was given to all respondents, in all measurements:

- an official portrait picture of the cabinet minister, taken at the inauguration at the beginning of the cabinet (see Appendix 5 and 8);
- his or her name (first and last);
- the name of his or her political party; and
- the name of his or her ministry (such as “Education, Culture, and Science” or “Defense”).

Although there are shortcomings to every assessment survey that involves stimuli, such as pictures and facts about the assessed person, the survey setup as discussed above is similar to other assessment surveys carried out in political science and political psychology. By using control groups and analyzing the differences in data between the control groups, potential invalidities have been ruled out to the greatest extent possible.

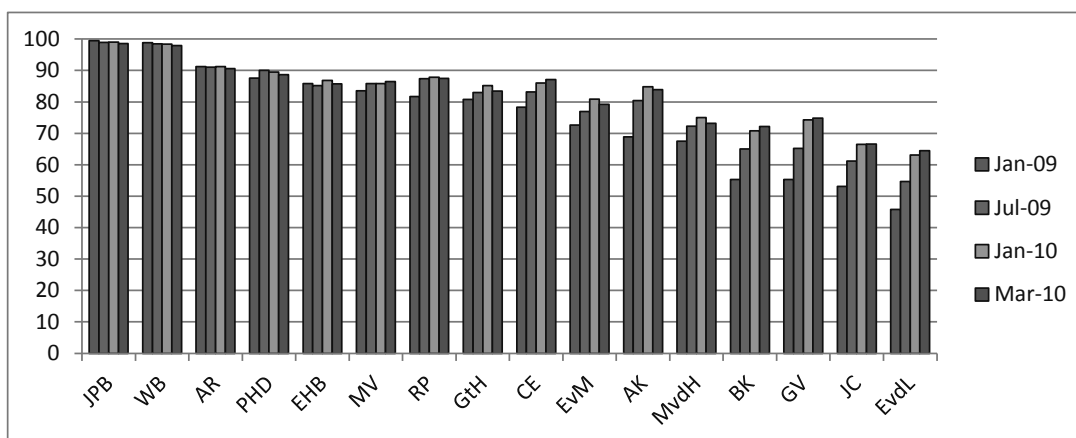


## Chapter 5: Survey Results

This chapter describes the results of the credibility survey with regard to 16 cabinet ministers who governed between 2007 and 2010 in the Netherlands. A credibility assessment exists for three initial judgments: Respondents were asked to rate every cabinet minister on a 4-point scale for reliability, honesty, and competence. Paragraph one discusses to what extent the LISS panel respondents recognized each cabinet minister.

**Results of Item 1—Acquaintance of Cabinet Ministers.** Some cabinet ministers are better known than others (for example, the ones with high-stakes portfolios and the leaders of the cabinet, such as the Prime Minister and both of the vice Prime Ministers). Differences in the acquaintance levels of the cabinet ministers can be understood by looking at other variables as well: Some have had longer political careers (Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice for CDA, was a cabinet minister between 1989 and 1994) or were already publicly known because of other public jobs (Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture and Science for PvdA, was a well-known scientist and television columnist). Many of the other cabinet ministers are background players and lacked any type of “celebrity status” prior to election as a cabinet minister.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of LISS panel respondents (weighted to represent the Dutch citizenry) that answered “yes” when asked whether they recognized the cabinet minister. The first bar represents the outcome of the measurement in January 2009, while the others represent survey outcomes of July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010, the last of which took place directly after the cabinet resigned in February 2010.



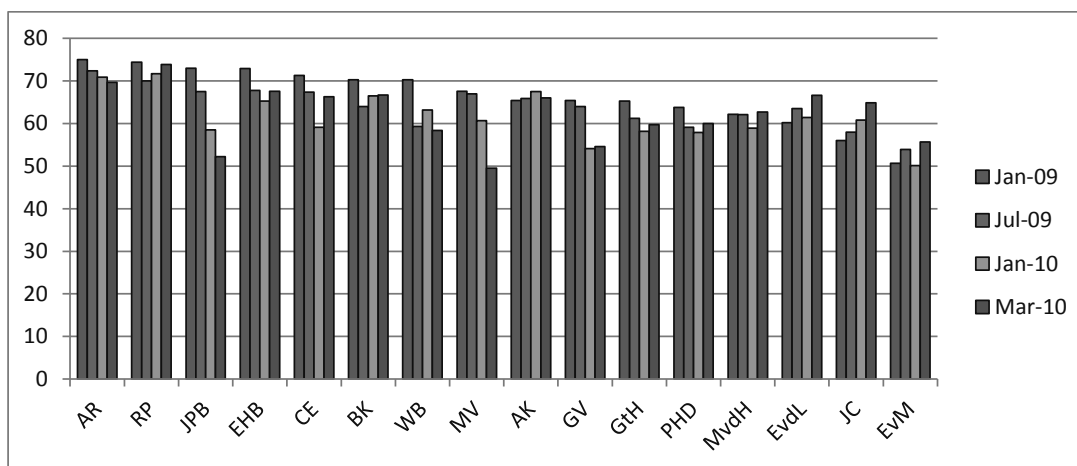
*Figure 3. Acquaintance. Extent to which respondents recognize the cabinet ministers of Balkenende IV in 2009 and 2010 (ranking order based on Jan 2009 data). See Appendix 6 for percentages.*

Almost everyone knows the Prime Minister (Jan Peter Balkenende, JPB) and the first Vice Prime Minister (Wouter Bos, WB). The number of respondents who recognized the cabinet ministers increased during the last 2 years of the cabinet term (2009 and 2010). For example, 55.3% of the respondents in January 2009 and 74.8% in March 2010 recognized Gerda Verburg (GV, Cabinet Minister for Agriculture). Just like Cabinet Minister Verburg, most cabinet ministers and their teams worked on the quality and credibility of their public appearance, and specifically their media appearance. Topics within their portfolios were discussed in newspapers and on television. Gerda Verburg herself was relatively new to politics, just like Ab Klink (AK), Jacqueline Cramer (JC), and other officials whose acquaintance levels started out low at the beginning of the cabinet term.

Politicians with longer political careers, such as Piet Hein Donner (PHD, Cabinet Minister of Social Welfare) and Ernst Hirsch (EHB, Cabinet Minister of Justice), had more stable acquaintance levels over time; they did not have to build their images from scratch.

Previously shaped poor images may be difficult to shed, but on the other hand, lower public expectations regarding a cabinet minister could make for an easy-to-please audience.

**Results of Item 2—Perceived Reliability of Cabinet Ministers.** Perceived reliability is the first and most important ingredient of the credibility of a cabinet minister. When the citizens do not believe a cabinet minister is reliable at all, it will be very difficult for him or her to attain higher levels of public credibility.



*Figure 4.* Ranking of 16 cabinet ministers based on their perceived reliability. Order of ranking based on data from January 2009 (first measurement). See Appendix 6 for percentages.

In January 2009, the higher perceived reliability scores were for vice Prime Minister Andre Rouvoet (AR), Ronald Plasterk (RP, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science), Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende (JPB), and Ernst Hirsch Ballin (EHB, Cabinet Minister of Justice). On average, they were considered the most reliable cabinet ministers by the respondents.

Those perceived to be the least reliable by the public, Eberhard van der Laan (EvdL, Cabinet Minister of Integration), Jacqueline Cramer (JC, Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) and Eimert van Middelkoop (EvM, Cabinet Minister of

Defense), were perceived as more reliable over time. All of the other cabinet ministers lost some of their perceived reliability between January 2009 and March 2010. Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer will be the object of further investigation in part VI of this dissertation (“Lower-Public Credibility Cabinet Ministers”).

The perceived reliability of Jan Peter Balkenende and Wouter Bos dropped significantly in March 2010, to the point where they were considered less reliable than most of the other cabinet ministers: Wouter Bos was number 11 and Jan Peter Balkenende was number 15, while they started at number 3 (JPB) and number 7 (WB). Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende’s perceived reliability dropped from over 70% in January 2009 to just over 50% in March 2010.

The fact that the coalition parties could not make a uniform decision on the continuation of military operations in Afghanistan forced the cabinet to resign. The wish of the PvdA (Wouter Bos, WB) was to discontinue the deployment of Dutch forces in Afghanistan after August 2010, while the CDA (Jan Peter Balkenende, JPB and Maxime Verhagen, MV) and Christen Unie (Andre Rouvoet, AR) desired otherwise.

Although Eimert van Middelkoop (EvM, Cabinet Minister of Defense) was responsible for the Dutch army, Maxime Verhagen (MV, Cabinet Minister of International Affairs) played a far more active role in the crisis and was the cabinet spokesman on this topic, which may have led to his perceived reliability-loss, displayed in table 12. Eimert van Middelkoop on the other hand, was considered more reliable at the end of the cabinet term and after the cabinet resigned, than he was mid-term (in January and July 2009).

Maxime Verhagen, was a key player in the resignation process of the cabinet in 2010 because he was in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and thus responsible for decisions concerning military operations in the Middle East. His perceived reliability shows a pattern

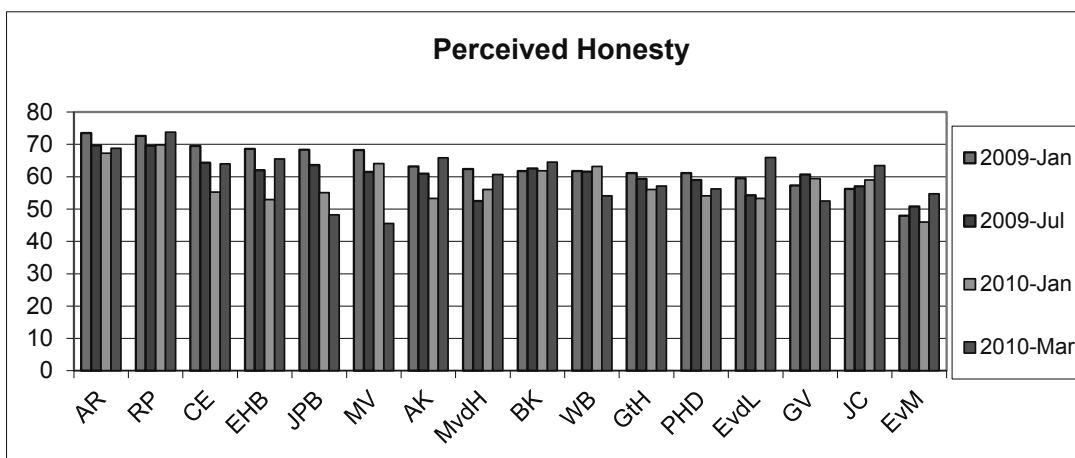
similar to Jan Peter Balkenende's: in January and July 2009, 67% of the public thought that Verhagen was reliable or very reliable. The percentage was lower in January 2010: 60.7%. In March (after the cabinet resignation) there was a severe drop: only 49.5% of the respondents believed that Maxime Verhagen was reliable. Both in politics and in the press, Jan Peter Balkenende, Wouter Bos, and Maxime Verhagen were the main communicators during the cabinet crisis. They all seemed to lose some of their perceived reliability during the Afghanistan decision-making process and the cabinet resignation. The perceived reliability of Vice Prime Minister Rouvoet (AR, cabinet minister of Youth and Family) remained relatively unharmed. Possibly, this had something to do with his position in the Cabinet: he may have been considered less of a high-stakes figure in major cabinet decisions (however, what happened behind the scenes may have differed from what LISS panel respondents were able to see).

On average, with all measurements taken in 2009 and 2010 considered, Vice Prime Minister Andre Rouvoet, Ronald Plasterk and Ernst Hirsch Ballin were publicly believed to be the most reliable cabinet ministers of the cabinet in 2009 and 2010. Their perceived reliability was high both after two years of the cabinet term in 2009 and around the time of the resignation in 2010.

The two cabinet ministers perceived as most reliable (Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk) will be the object of further investigation in Part V of this dissertation ("Understanding Higher Public Credibility of Cabinet Ministers in Action").

**Results of Item 3—Perceived Honesty of Cabinet Ministers.** Perceived honesty is the second attribute of the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Figure 5 shows a ranking of 16 cabinet ministers based on their perceived honesty. The first bar represents the outcome in January 2009. The second, third, and fourth bars represent the outcome in July 2009,

January 2010, and March 2010. All four bars represent the percentage of respondents that answered yes to the question of whether the cabinet minister appeared honest to them.



*Figure 5.* Perceived honesty of 16 Dutch cabinet ministers, measured four times in 2009 and 2010. Ranking order based on outcome in January 2009. See Appendix 6 for percentages.

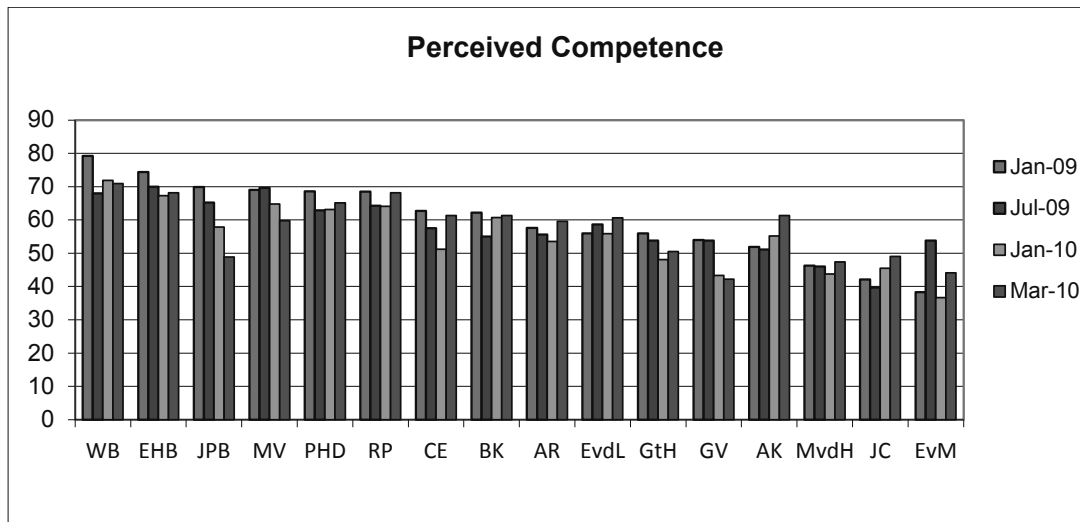
The perceived honesty ranking in Figure 5 shows some similarities to the previously discussed perceived reliability ranking. Most of the cabinet ministers go up or down in perceived honesty over time. Some have similar honesty scores at every one of the four measurements. The perceived honesty of Ronald Plasterk (RP, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science) and Bert Koenders (BK, Cabinet Minister of Development Cooperation) remained relatively stable over time. After the cabinet resigned, they even became a little more honest in the eyes of the public than they were before.

Most of the other cabinet ministers appeared less honest in the second and third measurement than in the first and last: Their perceived honesty dropped in July 2009 and January 2010, followed by a perceived honesty revival in March 2010 after the cabinet waived the white flag. This pattern is seen in the perceived honesty of all cabinet ministers except for Jan Peter Balkenende (JPB, Prime Minister), Maxime Verhagen (MV, Cabinet Minister of International

Affairs), Wouter Bos (WB, Vice Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister of Finance) and Gerda Verburg (GV, Cabinet Minister of Agriculture).

The three most important players in the cabinet crisis and resignation suffered most from perceived honesty loss (similar to their perceived reliability loss discussed in the previous paragraph). They were the ones in charge of the cabinet (Jan Peter Balkenende and Wouter Bos) and the one in charge of international affairs (Maxime Verhagen). Possibly, the crisis made them not only appear less reliable, but also less honest. More about this will be discussed in Part V and VI, where other variables will be analyzed to further our understanding of the concept of public credibility in action.

**Results of Item 4—Perceived Competence of Cabinet Ministers.** Perceived competence is the third attribute of a higher-credibility cabinet minister's character. A cabinet minister needs not only perceived reliability and honesty, but also perceived competence in order to attain higher credibility. Figure 6 shows a ranking of 16 cabinet ministers based on the citizen's assessment of Item 4, perceived competence. The first bar for each cabinet minister represents the outcome in January 2009. The second, third, and fourth bar represent the outcome in July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010. All four bars represent the percentage of respondents that answered "yes" to the question of whether the cabinet minister appeared competent to them.



*Figure 6.* Perceived competence of 16 Dutch cabinet ministers, measured four times in 2009 and 2010. Ranking order based on outcome in January 2009. See Appendix 6 for percentages.

In comparison with Figures 4 and 5, Figure 6 shows that perceived competence was generally lower than perceived reliability and honesty. Competence as a human characteristic differs fundamentally from reliability and honesty. Competence is located on the “masculine” side of the spectrum of human traits, whereas honesty and reliability are often considered to be more “feminine” character features (Crowley, 2011). Being competent means being capable of handling something—for example, one’s job. Competence belief is defined here as the public belief in the capability of a cabinet minister to do his or her job, and to do it well.

Some cabinet ministers attain large amounts of perceived reliability and perceived honesty, combined with smaller amounts of perceived competence. The order of cabinet ministers in the perceived competence ranking differs from the order of cabinet ministers in the perceived reliability and perceived honesty rankings, as discussed in the previous paragraphs.

When perceived competence is too low, the lack of competence belief among citizens can become an important indicator of a troubled public-political image. Trust-related characteristics,



such as perceived reliability and perceived honesty, are not the only features that matter in the creation of a higher credibility image (as the survey results in Part I demonstrated).

Wouter Bos (WB, Vice Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister of Finance), had the strongest competence ratings of the cabinet in 2009 and 2010, followed by Hirsch Ballin (EHB, Cabinet Minister of Justice). Perceived competence is clearly the most powerful asset in Wouter Bos' credibility profile (he was publicly perceived as only moderately reliable and honest). In this dissertation, credibility is a scale in which perceived reliability, honesty, and competence are equally important. Consequently, the fact that many of the Dutch people believe that Wouter Bos is capable of his job as Vice Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister of Finance compensates for the fact that the people believed him to lack reliability and, especially, honesty.

However, Hirsch Ballin made a much stronger credibility case than Wouter Bos: his credibility profile was evenly distributed, since he possessed a relatively large amount of all three ingredients: perceived reliability, honesty, and competence. Even though his perceived competence went down to some degree in July 2009 (second bar of Figure 6) and January 2010 (third bar of Figure 6), in March 2010 he was still believed to be one of the most competent cabinet ministers.

Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende started off well in the ranking of perceived competence: the LISS respondents on average considered him the third most competent cabinet minister after Bos and Hirsch Ballin. In 2009, respondents had not yet experienced Balkenende in office as Prime Minister for 7 years. His fourth term began in February 2007. Two years into his fourth term, he was considered one of the most competent cabinet ministers. He was probably considered competent enough to make citizens believe the government was in good hands. But Balkenende's perceived competence decreased a bit every 6 months, until by the beginning of

2010, fewer than 50% of the respondents believed that Balkenende was competent as Prime Minister. He resigned in February 2010 and did not take part in the next round of parliamentary elections.

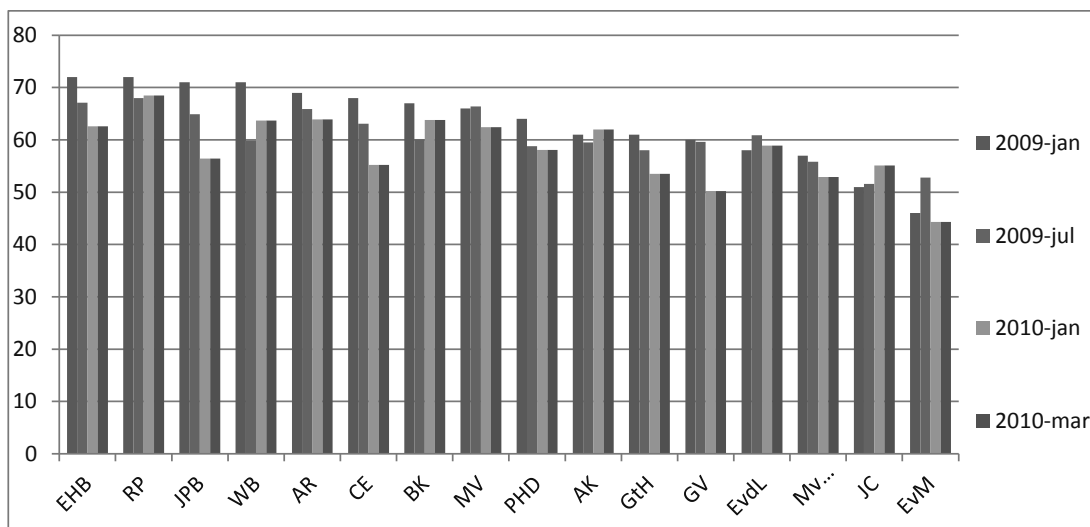
Of the six cabinet ministers at the end of the perceived competence ranking in Figure 6, four are female and two are male. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show that the four female cabinet ministers are located in the second half of the ranking for every one of the credibility variables (perceived reliability, perceived honesty, and perceived competence). See Appendix 7 for a discussion of gender differences between respondents and between cabinet ministers, and patterns of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence.

Both Jacqueline Cramer (JC, Cabinet Minister of the Environment and Energy) and Eimert van Middelkoop (EvM, Cabinet Minister of Defense) seemed unable to convince respondents that they were competent as cabinet ministers. Less than half of the LISS panel respondents thought that these two cabinet ministers were competent. Van Middelkoop went through a brief competence-belief revival in July 2009, but his average perceived competence rates remained genuinely low.

The next paragraph sums up the average credibility scores of all cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet.

**Average of Perceived Reliability, Honesty, and Competence: Public Credibility.** In the previous paragraphs, the 16 ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet were assessed by respondents in terms of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence (in sum: public

credibility). This paragraph discusses which of the cabinet ministers had the highest average scores on the three variables together.<sup>76</sup>



*Figure 7.* Public credibility ranking of 16 Dutch cabinet ministers of Balkenende IV (the average of their perceived reliability, honesty, and competence, measured four times during the last 2 years of the Balkenende IV cabinet's term. See Appendix 6 for percentages.

In Figure 7, the 16 ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet are ranked according to their public credibility. The ranking goes from the most credible cabinet minister in January 2009 (Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice) to the least credible cabinet minister in January 2009 (Van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense). The second, third, and fourth bars indicate the credibility of the cabinet ministers in July 2009, January 2010, and after the cabinet resigned in March 2010. Some shifting took place in the 2 years during which credibility was measured: In

<sup>76</sup> The average Crohnbach Alpha values for 16 ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV, in January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010, were 0.902, 0.911, 0.915, 0.915 respectively. The average Crohnbach Alpha value for the 12 ministers of the cabinet Rutte I, in January 2011 was 0.910. Although sympathy of cabinet ministers has been measured as well as reliability, honesty and competence, this variable is not part of the credibility scale, and is therefore not included in the scale, nor in the Crohnbach Alpha values.

March 2010 (fourth bar in Figure 7), not Hirsch Ballin was not the top scorer, but Plasterk. Van Middelkoop remained at the tail of the ranking throughout the survey period between January 2009 and March 2010. As mentioned in the general introduction, from here on, Cramer and Van Middelkoop will be referred to as LPC cabinet ministers (Lower Public Credibility), Ter Horst will be referred to as an MPC cabinet minister (Medium Public Credibility), and Plasterk and Hirsch Ballin will be referred to as HPC cabinet Ministers (Higher Public Credibility).

Most of the cabinet ministers went up or down in credibility over time, while some had similar credibility scores at every measurement (such as Ab Klink, AB, Cabinet Minister of Healthcare). Eberhard van der Laan (EvdL, Cabinet Minister of Integration) and Jacqueline Cramer (JC, Cabinet Minister of Energy), were the only cabinet ministers whose score went up a little over time. All of the other cabinet ministers lost some of their credibility between January 2009 and March 2010. Some of them lost heavily, like Camiel Eurlings (CE, Minister of Traffic and Water Management), Guusje ter Horst (GtH, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations) and Gerda Verburg (GV, Cabinet Minister of Agriculture).

Hirsch Ballin (EHB) and Plasterk (RP) had the highest credibility scores, which means they had the highest average scores on perceived reliability, perceived honesty, and perceived competence. In January 2009, over 70% of the LISS panel respondents thought Hirsch Ballin and Plasterk were the most reliable, honest, and competent of all. Hirsch Ballin's credibility dipped in January 2010, as did Guusje ter Horst's. Prime Minister Balkenende seemed to suffer from a serious credibility loss beginning in July 2009, dropping far below 60% in January and March 2010.

Each of the top scorers (Hirsch Ballin and Plasterk), the cabinet ministers at the tail of the credibility ranking (Cramer and Van Middelkoop) and one MPC cabinet minister (Ter Horst) are

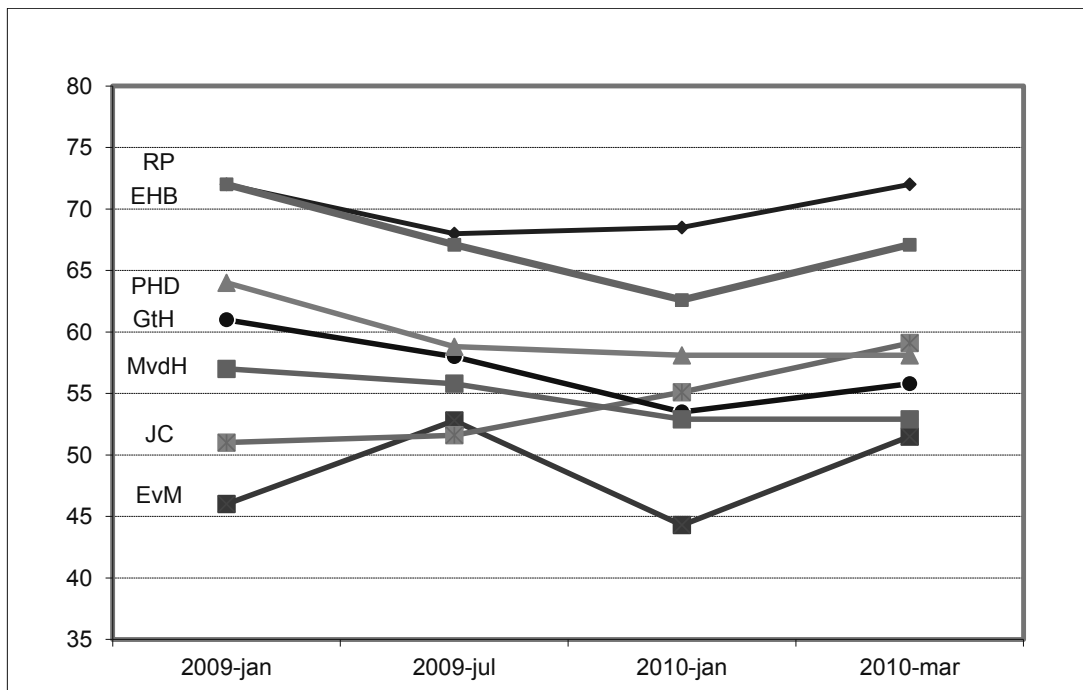
selected for further research, because these cabinet ministers are the most interesting cases.

These real-life cases provide enough credibility variation to learn more about the way in which executive politicians in the Netherlands gain and lose credibility and what future cabinet ministers can do to work on attaining and maintaining higher levels of public credibility.

## **Chapter 6: Case Selection and Credibility Profiles**

The previous chapters have shown which cases of the Balkenende IV cabinet are the most interesting cases for further research: two HPC cabinet ministers (Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk), two LPC cabinet ministers (Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer), and one MPC cabinet minister (Guusje ter Horst), who was the best performing female cabinet minister over time. Ter Horst's public credibility started out at a higher level than that of Maria van der Hoeven and did not dip as steeply in 2010 as the public credibility of Gerda Verburg did. Aside from the five selected cases, Van der Hoeven and Piet Hein Donner will also receive special attention in Parts V and VI.

All seven cases will receive more attention in this chapter. All components of their public credibility will be discussed as they developed over time in 2009 and 2010. This will provide a better understanding of their public credibility profiles, and the strengths and weaknesses of their image, before moving on to other methods of understanding public credibility in Parts III, IV, V, and VI of this dissertation.



*Figure 8.* Selection of interesting credibility cases. Data gathered in January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010. Public credibility is a combination of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence.

**Who They Are and Why They Were Selected.** Ronald Plasterk (male, born in 1957), Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, was selected for further examination because he excelled in perceived reliability and honesty throughout his term. Plasterk is affiliated with the PvdA (Labor) party. He was asked to become a cabinet minister at the time of the parliamentary elections of November 2006 by Vice Prime Minister Wouter Bos (PvdA). Plasterk maintained his perceived reliability and perceived honesty relatively well until after the cabinet resigned in February 2010, and his image seemed unaffected by the cabinet crisis early in 2010. On average (four measurements in 2009 and 2010), 72.5% of the respondents thought he was reliable, 71.5% thought he was honest, and 66.3% believed that Ronald Plasterk was competent.

Ernst Hirsch Ballin (male, born in 1950), Cabinet Minister of Justice, was selected for further examination because he was, like Plasterk, one of the strongest cabinet ministers in terms of attaining public credibility during the cabinet term (2007–2010). Hirsch Ballin was an experienced politician when he entered the Balkenende IV cabinet; he was a cabinet minister between 1989 and 1994 and later became Cabinet Minister of Justice again, in the Balkenende III cabinet (2006). Hirsch Ballin is affiliated with the Christian Democratic Appeal (with Prime Minister Balkenende). In 2009 and 2010, an average of 68.4% of the respondents thought he was reliable, 64.8% thought he was honest, and 70% believed that the Minister of Justice was competent.

Cabinet Minister of Defense Eimert van Middelkoop (male, born in 1949) was selected as a case for further research because he ended up at the tail end of the public credibility ranking. This cabinet minister is associated with the Christen Unie (CU) party with Vice Prime Minister Andre Rouvoet. Unfortunately for Van Middelkoop, only 52.6% of the respondents thought he was reliable, 49.9% thought he was honest, and a minority believed Van Middelkoop was competent (43.2%).

Jacqueline Cramer (female, born in 1951), Cabinet Minister of the Environment, Energy, and Sustainability, was selected for further analysis because she also ended up at the tail end of the public credibility ranking. A stronger aspect of her publicly perceived character was honesty. She ended up in the middle of the perceived honesty ranking. On average, 59.9% of the respondents thought she was reliable, 58.9% thought she was honest, and a minority thought she was competent (44.1%). Cramer is affiliated with the PvdA (Labor) party (with Vice Prime Minister and party leader of the PvdA Wouter Bos).



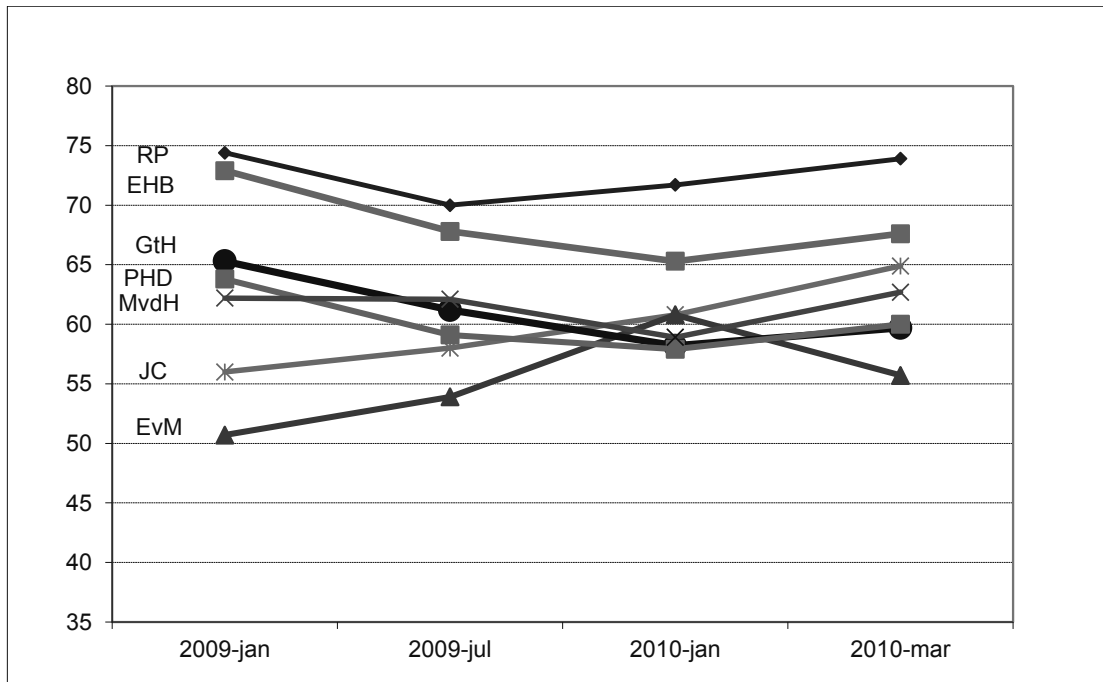
Last, Guusje ter Horst (female, born in 1952) is a member of the PvdA (Labor Party). In 2009 and 2010, she managed to attain an average perceived reliability of 61.1%. Her perceived honesty was lower (57.8%), and her perceived competence was the lowest (52.1%). Her credibility profile fits a common pattern, as most cabinet ministers were able to attain higher levels of perceived reliability and honesty than perceived competence. Compared to Van Middelkoop and Cramer, Ter Horst has done well on all three of the credibility variables, but not as well as Plasterk and Hirsch Ballin.

Ter Horst was selected as a case for further research to compare the HPC cabinet ministers and the LPC cabinet ministers to an MPC cabinet minister. Without a medium credibility case, this study would be incomplete, because once it becomes clear what sets the HPC cases apart from the LPC cases, we need to research how an MPC cabinet minister has attained enough credibility to stay away from the tail end of the credibility ranking. By researching possible reasons for why Ter Horst came close to attaining higher public credibility, and why she failed to get there, unique features of higher public credibility cabinet ministers may surface.

At the same time, the unique features of LPC cabinet ministers can be understood more thoroughly by analyzing a cabinet minister who could have been an LPC cabinet minister, since she was not an HPC cabinet minister but managed to attain more credibility than the LPC cabinet ministers did. Moreover, compared to the other three female cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet, Ter Horst attained quite a lot of public credibility. Therefore, her case will be treated as an HPC female cabinet minister, even though she did not manage to attain as much credibility as the top two ministers (Plasterk and Hirsch Ballin). Her strong features will be the center of attention in Part VI, where I will try to understand how Ter Horst managed to do relatively well

in terms of public credibility and what she could have done to attain more of it, learning from the HPC cases in Part V.

**Perceived Reliability of Cabinet Ministers over Time.** Figure 9 shows how each of the seven cabinet ministers went up or down in perceived reliability over time.



*Figure 9.* Perceived reliability of the selected cabinet ministers over time. Data were gathered in January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010. Perceived reliability of cabinet ministers is the first component of their public credibility profiles.

Plasterk maintained an outstanding level of perceived reliability over the last 2 years of the Balkenende IV term, with the only small dip occurring in July 2009. Hirsch Ballin lost some of his perceived reliability in July 2009 and January 2010, but experienced a revival in March 2010 after the cabinet resigned. Unlike Plasterk, Hirsch Ballin failed to bring his perceived reliability back up by the time the cabinet was halfway through its term. Cramer slowly but surely raised her perceived reliability over the last 2 years of the term. Her perceived reliability,

as measured through the LISS panel every 6 months, never dropped. Van Middelkoop's perceived reliability also went up during the first three measurements, after which it dropped back down in March 2010. Ter Horst, Donner, and Van der Hoeven all show a similar perceived reliability pattern: They started out in the middle of the ranking in January 2009, but then their perceived reliability went down, followed by a slight increase in March 2010.

What factors set the cabinet ministers with high levels of perceived reliability apart from the cabinet ministers with low and medium perceived reliability levels? What happened to them during their terms that may help to understand the opinions of the LISS panel respondents will be discussed in Parts III, V, and VI.

**Perceived Honesty of Cabinet Ministers over Time.** Figure 10 shows how each of the seven cabinet ministers went up or down in perceived honesty over time.

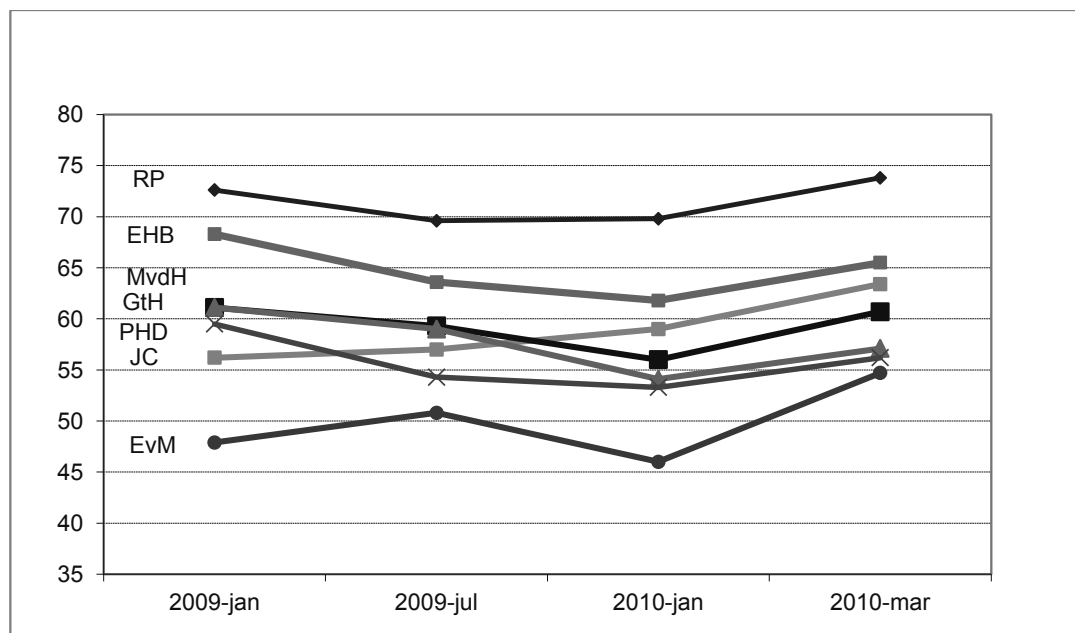


Figure 10. Perceived honesty of the selected cabinet ministers over time. Data were gathered in

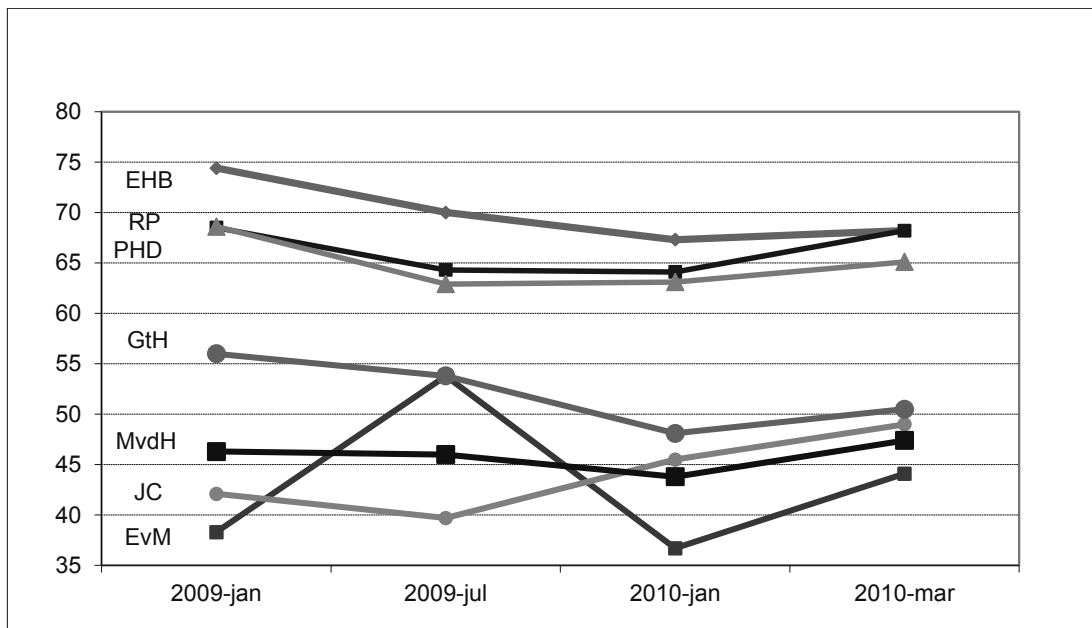
January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010. Perceived honesty of cabinet ministers is the second component of their public credibility profiles.

Van Middelkoop was considered the least honest cabinet minister by the LISS panel respondents. Although Cramer was selected as one of the two LPC cabinet ministers, her perceived honesty was the strongest asset in her credibility profile. As the data show, LISS panel respondents considered Cramer relatively honest, especially at the end of the cabinet term in March 2010.

Furthermore, the LISS panel respondents considered Plasterk to be far more honest than the other cabinet ministers. Additionally, although Hirsch Ballin is one of the two HPC cabinet ministers, perceived honesty was the weakest point in his credibility profile. Cramer seems to be the opposite of Hirsch Ballin in terms of public credibility: Her perceived honesty is relatively high even though the rest of her public credibility is lacking in strength (especially perceived competence, as shown in the next paragraph); and Hirsch Ballin's perceived honesty is relatively low (in January 2010 it is quite a bit lower than that of Jacqueline Cramer), even though he has a strong credibility profile due to his high perceived competence.

Similarly to what happened with their perceived reliability as discussed in the previous paragraph, the perceived honesty of the middle-range cabinet ministers Ter Horst, Van der Hoeven, and Donner dips in January 2010, followed by a slight revival in March 2010. Compared to all other cabinet ministers, they were in the middle of the perceived honesty ranking.

**Perceived Competence of Cabinet Ministers over Time.** Figure 11 shows how each of the seven cabinet ministers went up or down in perceived competence over time.



*Figure 11.* Perceived competence of the selected cabinet ministers over time. Data were gathered in January 2009, July 2009, January 2010, and March 2010. Perceived competence of cabinet ministers is the third component of their public credibility profiles.

The perceived competence graph in Figure 11 looks slightly different than the perceived reliability and perceived honesty graphs do. There are cabinet ministers at the very bottom of the graph, which indicates that some of them have inspired very little competence-belief in the LISS panel respondents: Van Middelkoop, Cramer, and Van der Hoeven ended their term with support from fewer than 50% of the respondents in terms of their perceived competence (aside from Van Middelkoop's single perceived competence revival in July 2009). Ter Horst started out well in January 2009, but later she failed to retain the confidence of over 55% of the LISS panel in terms of her competence. HPC Cabinet Ministers Hirsch Ballin and Plasterk and also MPC Cabinet Minister Donner set themselves apart from most cabinet ministers due to their ability to convince the public of their competence in the Balkenende IV cabinet.

## **The Credibility Survey: Reflection**

Part I demonstrated that there were three attributes respondents considered to be part of the character of a higher-credibility cabinet minister: reliability, honesty, and competence. Chapter 4 demonstrated how this prototype was transformed into a credibility measurement instrument used for a credibility survey. The credibility survey has revealed the average percentage of LISS panel respondents who believed that the ministers of Balkenende IV were reliable, honest, and competent. Results of the credibility survey were discussed in Chapter 5, which revealed who the HPC cabinet ministers were (Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk), who the LPC cabinet ministers were (Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer) and who were in the medium range. Chapter 6 demonstrated that even the HPC cabinet ministers had weak elements in their credibility profiles. Most cabinet ministers are either good at inspiring belief in their reliability and honesty, or in their competence. Only Plasterk managed to equally attain all three of these aspects of public credibility.

An important advantage of the credibility survey is that four measurements took place. These four measurements were spread out over a period of 1.3 years. Although the credibility of most cabinet ministers went up and down over time, the credibility of cabinet ministers was fairly consistent as far as the order in which they were placed on the credibility ranking: The winners of January 2009 were still the winners at the end of the cabinet term (with a small amount of variation), the LPC cabinet ministers remained at the tail of the ranking throughout the measurement period, and those in the middle of the ranking (among whom was Ter Horst) still retained medium credibility in March 2010 after the cabinet resigned. In other words, the credibility survey, as opposed to other types of measurement of the opinions of citizens

regarding traits of cabinet ministers, has more validity and reliability as a research instrument because four measurements took place instead of only one.

Additionally, the repeated measurements allowed for analysis of small but interesting increases and decreases in public credibility over time in Chapter 6. In Part III, these increases and decreases of the dependent variable (credibility) will be used to analyze the first explanatory variable (media appearance). Also in Part III, a first analysis will take place of the operational performance of the selected cabinet ministers. Then, in Parts V and VI, the five central cases will be studied one by one and in greater detail. This will help in developing an understanding of the mechanisms that play a role in attaining HPC, and will reveal requirements for cabinet ministers in the Netherlands to avoid being perceived as less credible.

# PART 3

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## A First Attempt to Understand Public Credibility







### **PART III: A FIRST ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND PUBLIC CREDIBILITY OF CABINET MINISTERS**

How can the great disparity in levels of public credibility among cabinet ministers be explained? Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk inspired citizens to believe in them more than they believed in other cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet.<sup>77</sup> Year after year, these cabinet ministers were able to attain higher levels of public credibility, and yet they were just politicians—they were like every other cabinet minister. They had access to the same resources as other cabinet ministers did. They had access to the same talent, the same marketing budget, training facilities, spin-doctors, and media outlets. Why, then, did the LISS panel respondents believe that they had more credibility than their fellow cabinet ministers did?

Many believe that media appearance plays an important role in the ability of cabinet ministers to attain higher levels of credibility.<sup>78</sup> Another variable often associated with public credibility of cabinet ministers is operational performance. Both variables will be researched in Part III, where selected cabinet ministers are compared to one another, and additionally in Parts V and VI, where individual cases of cabinet ministers will be analyzed in greater depth.

Chapter 7 contains an analysis of the media appearance of the selected cabinet ministers, aimed at finding patterns of positive and negative comments in national newspapers with regard to the HPC and LPC cabinet ministers. Perhaps public credibility can be understood simply by looking at the nature of newspaper headlines in the period before the LISS panel gave its judgment about the credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands. Chapter 8 contains an

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<sup>77</sup> Empirical support for statements about the credibility of Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk can be found in Part II of this book.

<sup>78</sup> For a recent discussion, see Vliegthart (2012).

analysis of the operational performance of the selected cases as assessed by people from their professional inner circles. Is it possible that what cabinet ministers actually do, regardless of how the media report it, matters in terms of their ability to attain higher public credibility?

## Chapter 7: Could Media appearance be an Explanatory Variable?

The media content analysis discussed in this chapter was applied to the two HPC cases (Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Minister of Justice, and Ronald Plasterk, Minister of Education, Culture, and Science), and the two LPC cases (Eimert van Middelkoop, Minister of Defense, and Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment). These two sets of cases are the furthest away from each other on the public credibility ranking discussed in Part II. Consequently, if any patterns exist, applying the content analysis to these four cases offers the best chance of finding them.

**Design, Operationalization, and Data Collection.** A few criteria were used to select media sources for analysis:

- The sources were 13 of the most-read Dutch national newspapers.<sup>79</sup>
- Articles were published between November 1, 2008 and March 31, 2010 and divided into four sets of articles, published in the months before each of the public credibility measurements took place.<sup>80</sup>
- All articles included the word “Minister” and the first and last name of the selected cabinet minister in the headline or lead of the article, to ensure that the article contained a message about the cabinet minister and/or his or her work.

These selection criteria were used to find newspaper articles in LexisNexis, which resulted in 1,532 articles. Only the headlines and leads of these articles were studied. The headlines reflected and/or created opinions about the cabinet minister in the most visible part of

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<sup>79</sup> The national newspapers in the source engine of LexisNexis (accessed through the library of Tilburg University) are: *Nederlands Dagblad*, *De Volksrant*, *Het Parool*, *Het Financieele Dagblad*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *AD/Algemeen Dagblad*, *Dagblad De Pers*, *Metro*, *Trouw*, *Spits*, *NRC Next*, *De Telegraaf*, and *Boerderij Vandaag*.

<sup>80</sup> In January 2009, July 2009, January 2010 and March 2010.

the article.<sup>81</sup> When scanning a newspaper, readers most likely read the headlines first, because they are usually printed in larger, more visible font and the headline is usually the part of the article that best reflects the content.

Methodologically, the trickiest part of this media content analysis was the coding process.

There were 7 categories into which all articles were divided:

- articles found with the cabinet minister mentioned in headline or lead (category A);
- articles found with the cabinet minister mentioned in the headline (category B);
- articles with headlines in which the cabinet minister's name was mentioned, and in which the minister's opinions, policies, or plans were expressed in a neutral way (category C);<sup>82</sup>
- articles in which third parties<sup>83</sup> expressed their support for the cabinet minister in the headline (category D);
- articles in which third parties expressed their disagreement with the cabinet minister in the headline (category E);
- articles in which third parties or the authors of the articles stated that the cabinet minister's performance was good (a positive judgment, category F); and
- articles in which third parties or the authors of the articles stated that the cabinet minister's performance was lacking (a negative judgment, category G).

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<sup>81</sup> In the history of communications studies, some authors have argued that mass media creates public opinions and attitudes, while others have argued that mass media reflects them. There seems to be an agreement in more recent literature, though, that mass media most likely both creates and reflects public opinions (see Neuendorf, 2002). The media analysis in this dissertation is based on the latter assumption.

<sup>82</sup> For example: "Jacqueline Cramer reserves 1 million euro for housing," or "Ernst Hirsch Ballin wants to lower crime rates."

<sup>83</sup> Third parties can be stakeholders, professionals in the field of a cabinet minister, politicians, pressure groups, advisors, or parliamentarians.

**Interpretation and Methodological Caveats.** Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) noted that all coding is subjective, which means that the outcome of a media content analysis, too, depends on “coder interpretation of content meaning” (p. 126).<sup>84</sup> Neuendorf (2010),<sup>85</sup> however, stated that with “good codebook definition” and experienced coders, it is possible to increase validity and reliability to accepted levels. In the media content analysis applied here, there is no issue of intercoder reliability, as only one coder has done all of the coding. This raises another concern, however, which is subjectivity. Therefore, a second opinion and discussion took place after the coding process had been completed.

The coding process itself was one of trial and error, but eventually all of the articles fit into just 7 categories. Category B contains the total number of articles in which the cabinet minister was mentioned in the headline. Those articles are divided into categories C through G, as they either expressed a neutral message (C), support for the cabinet minister’s plans (D), disagreement with the cabinet minister’s plans (E), criticism on the cabinet minister’s performance (F), or compliments about the cabinet minister’s performance (G).

**Findings per Cabinet Minister in the First Four Categories.** Table 12 shows the results. The total number of articles (column A) that was found varies per cabinet minister, even though the same selection criteria were used to find the articles. The first difference between the HPC and LPC cabinet ministers in Table 12 becomes evident when looking at the total number of articles found (A): Hirsch Ballin’s name occurred in 451 headlines or leads of articles, while Plasterk’s name occurred the most: 560 times. Van Middelkoop had the lowest number of

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<sup>84</sup> Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. G. (2005). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research* (2nd ed.). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>85</sup> Neuendorf, K. A., & Kane, C. L. (2010). *The content analysis guidebook online*. Retrieved from <http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content>

occurrences in headlines or leads, at 223, followed by Cramer, who was mentioned in the headlines or leads of 300 articles. This pattern does not hold when looking at the numbers of headlines alone (Category B shows that LPC Minister Cramer was mentioned in headlines more often than HPC Minister Hirsch Ballin). In category B, only Plasterk stands out.

Table 12

*Raw Numbers of Headlines Studied, Divided into Five out of Seven Categories*

	Hirsch Ballin	Plasterk	Van Middelkoop	Cramer
A Total number of articles found with cabinet minister in <u>headline or lead</u>	451	560	223	300
B Total number of articles with cabinet minister mentioned <u>in headline</u>	63	135	38	73
C Total number of articles with the cabinet minister's name mentioned in the headline and in which the minister's opinions, policies, or plans were expressed in a <u>neutral</u> way	58	106	26	61
D Total number of articles in which third parties expressed their <u>support</u> for the cabinet minister in the headline	1	3	4	1
E Total number of articles in which third parties expressed their <u>disagreement</u> with the cabinet minister in the headline	4	26	8	11

Row C shows the number of headlines in which the cabinet minister's opinions, policies, or plans were expressed in a neutral way. This category was added to provide room in this analysis for the difference between cabinet ministers who managed to get quoted in the national press and those who remained more in the shadows. The ministers who were quoted more often may have been more successful in their attempts to use the press for broadcasting their ideas and their presence for agenda setting. Table 12, however, shows that there is no such pattern: The opinions, policies, and plans of HPC cabinet ministers did not get mentioned in headlines more than those of LPC cabinet ministers did (Hirsch Ballin's opinions, policies, and plans were mentioned 58 times, while Cramer's were mentioned 61 times).

Rows D and E contain the numbers of headlines in which third parties agreed with, or supported, policies of cabinet ministers (row D) and headlines in which third parties disagreed with cabinet ministers (row E). The following headline shows an example of a third party disagreeing with the plans of a cabinet minister: "Lawyers in action against Hirsch Ballin, Minister wants pre-arrest for rioters and street fighters".<sup>86</sup> Not LPC Ministers Cramer and Van Middelkoop, but HPC Minister Ronald Plasterk has faced the most disagreement of all cabinet Ministers: 26 headlines mentioned that he faced opposition from other people or parties. For example: "Reformed Homo's Angry at Plasterk",<sup>87</sup> and "[According to the] SGP, Plasterk breaches Freedom of Education".<sup>88</sup> 12 articles in total featured headlines of this kind in the second period alone. Very few articles (4) mentioned anyone disagreeing with Ernst Hirsch Ballin's policies.

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<sup>86</sup> *Het Parool*. (2010, Jan 30). Binnenland. Blz. 5, 317 woorden, GPD.

<sup>87</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Gereformeerde homo's laaiend op Plasterk." *Metro (NL)*, 6 mei 2009 woensdag, NIUEWS; Blz. 2, 79 woorden.

<sup>88</sup> Original text in Dutch: "SGP: Plasterk raakt vrijheid onderwijs". *Nederlands Dagblad*, May 14, 2009 Thursday, Blz. 3, 383 woorden.



**Media Judgments on Performance by Cabinet Ministers.** There are two more categories of data, which may be the most interesting ones when searching to understand public credibility in action:

- articles with a headline in which a positive judgment about the performance of the cabinet minister was expressed (F), and
- articles with a headline in which a negative judgment about the performance of the cabinet minister was expressed (G).

Note that these categories differ fundamentally from the last two categories in Table 12. A judgment is a statement on the quality of the cabinet minister's work. It reveals whether the cabinet minister is doing a good or a bad job. The last two categories of Table 12, on the other hand, reveal opinions of third parties about political decisions the cabinet minister has made. Examples of a negative judgment on the quality of a cabinet minister's work can be found in the following two headlines: "Lawyers: Chaos around Translators is the Fault of [the Ministry of] Justice"<sup>89</sup> and "Senate: Hirsch Ballin Has Violated the Law."<sup>90</sup>

Table 13 shows the raw numbers of headlines about the cabinet ministers in the two categories of "positive judgment" and "negative judgment," divided into four periods. The periods correspond to the measurements of the public credibility of the cabinet minister:

- The first period is from November 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009, to analyze media content before the first credibility measurement took place with the LISS panel in January 2009.

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<sup>89</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Advocaten: chaos bij tolken is schuld justitie." *Het Parool*. (2010, Mar 29). Binnenland; Blz. 7, 889 woorden, GPD.

<sup>90</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Eerste Kamer: Hirsch Ballin heeft de wet overtreden." *NRC Handelsblad* (2009, December 3). Binnenland; Blz. 2, 367 woorden.

- The second period is from February 1, 2009 through July 31, 2009, to analyze media content before the second credibility measurement took place with the LISS panel in July 2009.
- The third period is from August 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010, to analyze media content before the third credibility measurement took place with the LISS panel in January 2010.
- The fourth period is from February 1, 2010 through March 31, 2010, to analyze media content before the fourth credibility measurement took place with the LISS panel in March 2010.

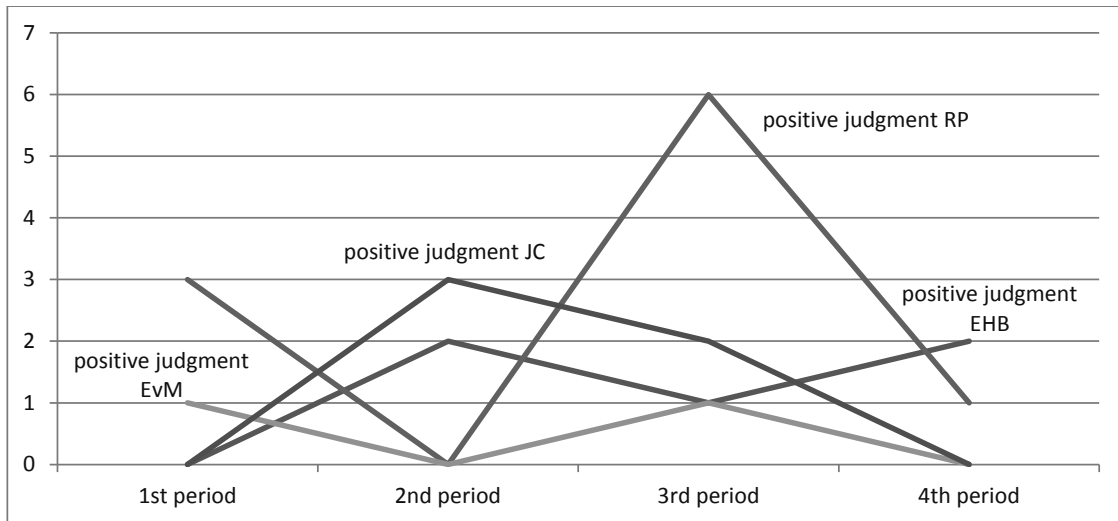
Table 13, Figure 13 and Figure 14 show the numbers of positive and negative judgments for each cabinet minister per period. Appendix 9 contains eight tables with data from the media content analysis for each of the four cabinet ministers.

Table 13

*Media Content Analysis of Articles with “Minister” and the First Name and Last Name of the Cabinet Minister in the Headlines of National Newspapers between November 1, 2008 and March 31, 2010. Raw numbers of headlines.*

	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period	Total
Negative judgment EHB	0	0	2	1	3
Negative judgment RP	1	8	1	0	10
Negative judgment EVM	23	0	4	1	28
Negative judgment JC	0	4	2	1	7
	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period	4th period

Positive judgment EHB	0	2	1	2	5
Positive judgment RP	3	0	6	1	9
Positive judgment EVM	1	0	1	0	2
Positive judgment JC	0	3	2	0	5



*Figure 13.* Raw numbers of positive judgments in headlines about each cabinet minister, based on media content analysis of articles with the word “Minister” and the minister’s first name and last name in the headlines or leads of national newspapers between November 1, 2008 and March 31, 2010.

Figure 13 shows the number of positive judgments in headlines about the four cabinet ministers. Ronald Plasterk stands out, as he received more compliments in headlines (9 headlines were found) than other cabinet ministers did (less than 5 headlines each).

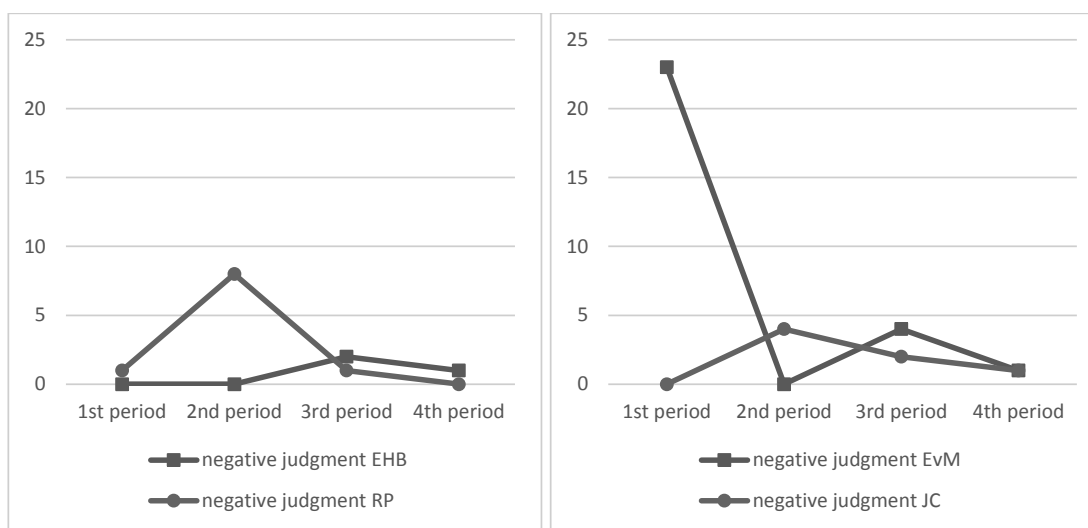


Figure 14. Raw numbers of positive judgments in the headlines about each cabinet minister, based on media content analysis of articles with “minister” and the minister’s first name and last name in the headlines or leads of national newspapers between November 1, 2008 and March 31, 2010.

Figure 14 shows that Plasterk also received quite a bit of criticism regarding his performance (10 headlines were found). Examples include: “Plasterk Frustrates [the process of] Homo Emancipation”,<sup>91</sup> “Plasterk calls for Attention, But Doesn’t Know the Answer”.<sup>92</sup> HPC Minister Hirsch Ballin and LPC Minister Cramer received fewer criticism on their performance in newspaper headlines (respectively 3 and 7 headlines were found).

LPC Minister Van Middelkoop received far more negative judgments in the most visible parts of the newspaper articles (28 headlines). Two examples include: “Minister Cannot Afford to Stumble Once More. ChristenUnie Minister Promises the Parliament to be Better after

<sup>91</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Plasterk frustreert homo-emancipatie”. *Nederlands Dagblad*, May 5, 2009 Tuesday, Blz. 4, 231 woorden.

<sup>92</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Plasterk steekt vinger op, maar blijft het antwoord schuldig”. *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 13 juni 2009 zaterdag, WEEKEND; Blz. 16, 886 woorden.

Inconvenient Statements about Afghanistan Interviews”<sup>93</sup> and “Riot about Afghanistan Due to ‘Communication Mistake’—Minister Van Middelkoop Apologizes.”<sup>94</sup> In the third and fourth periods, he faced a lot fewer such judgments. Van Middelkoop succeeded at minimizing negative news about his performance throughout the rest of the cabinet term, but his image did not recover. Although his perceived competence went up from less than 38% in January 2009, to over 53% in July 2009 (see Chapter 6), it plummeted again during the last months of the cabinet term, and Van Middelkoop’s public credibility profile remained problematic throughout.

**Media Appearance as Explanatory Variable of Public Credibility.** It was expected that LPC cabinet ministers would trigger many more negative media headlines than HPC cabinet ministers, and vice versa. This is not the case. Therefore, lower-public credibility and media coverage in terms of disagreement, opposition and negative judgments about cabinet ministers in newspaper headlines seem unrelated. Higher-public credibility and media coverage in terms of agreement, support and positive judgments in newspaper headlines seem unrelated as well.

In this chapter, only one clear pattern was discovered that sets the HPC cabinet ministers apart from the LPC cabinet ministers: The names and ministries of the HPC cabinet ministers occurred more often in the leads or headlines of articles in national newspapers than did the names and ministries of the LPC cabinet ministers. Hirsch Ballin’s name occurred in 451 headlines or leads of articles, and Plasterk’s name occurred the most: 560 times. Van Middelkoop had the lowest number of occurrences, at 223, followed by Cramer, who was mentioned in the headlines or leads of 300 articles.

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<sup>93</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Minister kan niet nóg een keer onhandig zijn; ChristenUnie-bewindsman belooft in Kamer beterschap na ongelukkige uitspraken over Afghanistan-interviews.” *NRC Handelsblad* (2009, January 29). Binnenland; Blz. 3, 718 woorden.

<sup>94</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Rel om uitspraken over Afghanistan door ‘communicatiefout’ - Minister Van Middelkoop put zich uit in excuses.” *AD/Algemeen Dagblad*. (2009, January 29). BIBU04; Blz. 4, 355 woorden.

Although one of the LPC cabinet ministers (Van Middelkoop) faced many more negative judgments on his performance than did the others, this variable did not set both of the LPC cabinet ministers apart from the HPC cabinet ministers, because LPC Minister Cramer faced fewer negative judgments in the headlines of national newspapers than did HPC Minister Plasterk. In Parts V and VI more in-depth media analyses will take place to research the relationship between the content of newspaper articles and public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands with a different approach.

## **Chapter 8: Could Operational Performance be an Explanatory Variable?**

In 2008, 2009, and 2010, 12 advisors from the inner circle of the Balkenende IV cabinet were interviewed about the operational performance of their cabinet ministers. These inner-circle members all worked for or with cabinet ministers as top advisors. Additionally, a few parliamentarians were interviewed to find out who they considered to be the best- and least-performing cabinet ministers. The interviews were organized as a form of pre-research, aimed at discovering how experts from the inner circle of cabinet ministers define operational performance and the ideal, typical “good cabinet minister.” They were asked questions about the skills they think cabinet ministers need and who they considered to be the three best ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet if they used their own definitions of performance.

The first attempt to find links between ministerial or operational performance and public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands has helped to create a foundation for further understanding of operational performance. At the time of the interviews, each inner-circle expert fit into one of the following four categories:

- political advisor (or personal assistant, PA)—an all-rounder, employed by the political party with which the cabinet minister is affiliated, and usually stays by the side of his or her political boss during most daily activities;
- policy advisor (director, director general or secretary general)—specializes in aspects of the cabinet ministers’ policy portfolios, manages (part of) the ministry, and is employed by the ministry;
- communications advisor (spokesman or communications director)—specializes in communicating, marketing and image branding (of both the policies produced at the ministry and the cabinet minister as an “ambassador” of the ministry), is employed by

the ministry, spends some time with the cabinet minister on a daily basis, and therefore knows him or her well professionally (and possibly personally); and

- parliamentarian.

The in-depth interviews provided answers to open questions about the cabinet ministers, who they were, what they did, and how they did it. Several interviews turned out to be especially interesting, because they included in-depth questioning about the two higher- and one LPC cabinet ministers (Ballin, Plasterk, and Van Middelkoop). Inner-circle opinions about MPC cabinet minister Guusje ter Horst can be found in Appendix 10. They are not included in this chapter because they do not directly contribute to answering any of the research questions. Furthermore, despite several persistent attempts, no interviewees were willing to cooperate in an interview specifically about the performance of Cramer, but inner circle experts from other ministries did comment on her performance.

Not only were inner-circle experts from the ministries of selected cabinet ministers interviewed, but also some inner-circle members from other ministries and from the Parliament as well, to gather a wider variety of opinions about each of the selected cabinet ministers from various perspectives. The main aim of the inner-circle interviews was to obtain a narratively enriched overview of the operational performance of the selected cabinet ministers. Some of the experts from the inner circle have worked for not one, but two cabinet ministers, which enables them to compare their current cabinet minister to previous ones in terms of their own definitions of performance.

**Design, Operationalization, and Data Collection.** Every inner-circle interview was structured in the same way. The questions were partly inspired by the items of the LISS panel survey discussed in Part II, in which respondents were asked which characteristics a higher-



credibility cabinet minister possesses, followed by questions about the extent to which every one of the 16 cabinet ministers of Balkenende IV lived up to the prototype. The in-depth interviews started with the question of what a good cabinet minister is, followed by the question of which cabinet ministers fit the profile best and which ones were lacking and why. The standard questions of the inner-circle interviews are listed and discussed below.

In addition to questions about what a good cabinet minister is, and who lived up to the prototype, each interview ended with questions about the cabinet minister the interviewee knows best. The interviewee was asked how the cabinet minister did in four traditional areas of the ministerial job. These four areas were established during another phase of pre-research in which group interviews were organized with insiders in order to design the style assessment (see Part IV). The insiders who were consulted to design the style assessment believe that the basic features and skills every cabinet minister needs can be found in four different areas of work:

- the political arena and the parliament;
- lobby and interest groups, policy stakeholders, and professionals;
- the media (newspaper journalism and television performance) and
- the cabinet (cooperation with other cabinet ministers).

These areas of work are also used to structure one of the questions of the inner-circle interviews regarding the skills and policy goal realization of cabinet ministers. Below, all questions of the inner-circle interviews are discussed.

**Question 1. “In your opinion, what defines a good cabinet minister?”** This question was added because it gives the inner-circle expert a chance to describe his or her own prototypical “good” (in other words, highly performing) cabinet minister. The good cabinet

minister he or she describes will be used as a prototype to which other cabinet ministers can be compared during the rest of the interview.

**Question 2. “How do you think citizens would define a higher-credibility cabinet minister?”** This question was added to compare the expectations of inner-circle experts to the expectations of LISS panel respondents, as discussed in Part I.

**Question 3. “In light of ‘the good cabinet minister’ you just described, which three cabinet ministers come closest to the ideal type?”** This question was added to find out which cabinet minister is doing the best job according to the inner-circle experts, when they get a chance to define performance on their own. It was also included to see whether the best-performing cabinet ministers, according to the inner-circle experts, are the same as the HPC cabinet ministers chosen by LISS panel respondents. After all, this would imply that there is a link between the public credibility of cabinet ministers and their skills and policy goal realization (being a “good” cabinet minister).

**Question 4. “Who do you consider the best performing female cabinet minister?”** This question was added in case none of the three best-performing cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet, according to inner-circle experts, is female. This question helps to gather some information on the performance of female cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. Two of these female cabinet ministers have been selected for further research: a lower-credibility cabinet minister (Cramer) and a medium-credibility cabinet minister (Ter Horst). Are their public credibility levels connected to their skills and policy goal realization? Is Ter Horst a better cabinet minister according to the inner-circle experts than is Cramer, an LPC cabinet minister? In other words, do experts (inner-circle experts) agree with citizens (LISS panel) on the ranking of

cabinet ministers as discussed in Part II? And why were none of the female cabinet ministers able to attain higher levels of public credibility?

**Question 5. “Who are the three ministers whose performance worries you, in the light of the prototype you just described?”** This question was added to find out who has failed to convince the inner circle of his or her performance as a cabinet minister, and to see whether the lowest-performing cabinet ministers, according to the experts of the inner circle, are the same as the LPC cabinet ministers chosen by LISS panel respondents in Part II.

**Question 6. “Now I would like to go back to your top three. What makes the first of these the best cabinet minister?”** The aim of this question is to find out what this cabinet minister is doing right, in order to find out whether the higher-credibility cabinet ministers have done a better job at convincing the inner circle of the quality of their skills and policy goal realization than have the LPC cabinet ministers. In addition, it facilitates a deeper understanding of skills and policy goal realization and how cabinet ministers create a positive (or negative) image in the context of the inner circle.

**Question 7. “How would you describe his/her performance in the following fields?”** The inner circle interviewee is asked to describe the cabinet minister’s skills and policy goal realization in the following fields (the same four fields found in the conceptual framework of the style and skills test described in the previous chapter):

- the parliament;
- lobby and interest groups, policy stakeholders, and professionals (“the field”);
- the media (newspaper and journalists and television reporters); and
- the cabinet (other cabinet ministers).

**Question 8. “What advice would you give the cabinet minister to improve himself/herself?”** This question was added to determine the shortcomings of the cabinet minister, according to the inner-circle expert. This could provide information that may explain the public credibility (or lack thereof) of cabinet ministers.

**Question 9. “Now I would like to go back to the cabinet minister whose performance you worry about. What could he/she do better?”** This question was added to gather information on the problematic performance of some of the cabinet ministers. If the cabinet minister to whom this question refers is also a lower-credibility cabinet minister, it may help to understand how lower public credibility may be linked to unsuccessful performance on the part of a cabinet minister.

**Question 10. “How would you describe his/her performance in the following fields?”** The inner-circle expert will be asked to describe another cabinet minister’s skills and policy goal realization in the following fields:

- the parliament;
- lobby and interest groups, policy stakeholders, and professionals (“the field”);
- the media (newspaper journalists and television reporters); and
- the cabinet (other cabinet ministers).

Questions six through nine may be repeated until all three of the best- and least-performing cabinet ministers have been addressed. If the interview concerns only the cabinet minister for whom the inner-circle expert works, this step may be skipped.

**Interpretation and Methodological Caveats.** One shortcoming of the style test (see Part IV) also applies to the inner-circle opinions: Difficulties finding inner-circle experts who were willing to answer these questions about cabinet ministers (because of their professional oath) led

to several adjustments in the process of respondent selection. However, a replacement interviewee was found in most cases, due to which high-ranked interviewees were found for all but one of the key ministries. Interviewees willing to cooperate patiently took the time to complete the interview, and it is thanks to their efforts that the outcome of this aspect of the research project provides enough information about cabinet ministers and their work to facilitate a better understanding of both the performance and credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands.

Other potential methodological shortcomings are related to validity, but they can be overcome by careful interpretation of the results. The claim that the interviews provide knowledge regarding the true performance of cabinet ministers cannot be made, because the interviews have provided opinions, not necessarily facts. The absolute truth about the skills and policy goal realization of selected cabinet ministers cannot be measured by means of 12 in-depth interviews. More interviews could have been organized in order to give the research project a more quantitative character. However, selecting a smaller, more high-level group of people from the inner circle and researching their opinions by means of in-depth interviews has the advantage of their answers being more precise. Also, there are only a few people in the inner circle of a cabinet minister who know him or her well enough to answer the previously discussed interview questions. This method of in-depth interviewing has increased the researcher's ability to gather a wide variety of information from a single individual who has experience and sophisticated knowledge of a cabinet minister's performance.

**Answers: Cabinet Ministers and Their Performance as Assessed by Inner-circle Experts.** The first interview question (what defines a good cabinet minister?) was answered differently by each inner-circle expert. These were some of the answers:

- “Earning the trust of the parliament” (WvdC).<sup>95</sup>
- “Making things happen and limiting bureaucracy. Having no pretenses and a lot of knowledge. Having authority. The ability to adjust a point of view. Government experience. Mastering the political game.” (MLV).<sup>96</sup>
- “Being an authority on your own terrain and connecting people within the cabinet and within the ministry. Also, making connections between policy preparation, decision making, and external implementation. Last but not least, cooperation is key” (ZvR).<sup>97</sup>
- “Serving public office. Knowing your profession. Providing a platform for your message, prioritizing, and delivering results” (JWH).<sup>98</sup>
- “Formulating clear goals and communicating about them consistently and clearly” (BM).<sup>99</sup>
- “The ability to make decisions, organizing advice around you, using your network, mastering the political game, being strong (both physically and mentally)” (MR).<sup>100</sup>
- “He has to formulate clear goals, and realize them too. He needs to have media skills and the ability to operate with regards to the parliament” (FJ).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> “Je moet het vertrouwen van de Kamer kunnen winnen.”

<sup>96</sup> “Dingen voor elkaar krijgen, dingen afschaffen, geen pretenties hebben, veel weten, gezag hebben, een standpunt kunnen draaien, bestuurlijke ervaring en het politieke spel beheersen.”

<sup>97</sup> “Een goede Minister is gezagsvol op zijn terrein en kan verbindingen leggen binnen het kabinet, binnen een ministerie, en tussen de beleidsvoorbereiding en besluitvorming en externe implementatie. Samenwerking met alle partners is eveneens wezenlijk.”

<sup>98</sup> “De publieke zaak dienen, vakinhoud, dingen voor het voetlicht kunnen brengen, prioriteren, resultaten leveren.”

<sup>99</sup> “Heldere doelstellingen op een consistente heldere manier voor voetlicht brengen.”

<sup>100</sup> “Besluitvaardigheid, goed advies organiseren, je netwerk gebruiken, het politieke spel beheersen, kracht (zowel fysiek als qua persoonlijkheid).”

<sup>101</sup> “Hij moet heldere doelen formuleren, die doelen moeten ook gehaald worden, hij moet media vaardig zijn en het opereren in de Tweede Kamer moet goed zijn.”

- “He needs to know his portfolio, be verbally gifted, and have a feel for image building” (RR).<sup>102</sup>
- “Being a good and adequate ambassador of the ministry towards the Ministry of Finance as well as Parliament. Contributing to what is important to the political party. Being able to communicate with worried citizens directly” (SWJ).<sup>103</sup>
- “A minister is good when he executes the cabinet goals, when he can improve policies, when he remains standing politically and in the media. The most important criterion for being successful in all three domains [policy making, politics and the media] and remaining seated, is having a strong personality. Being authentic” (GF).<sup>104</sup>

The shared elements most inner-circle experts mentioned being among the features of the prototypical “good” cabinet minister refer to the four areas of work mentioned earlier and established in pre-research for the style assessment. These four areas of a cabinet minister’s daily work reflect the political, public, connective, and rational style (see Part IV). To summarize the opinions of all 10 interviewees, a cabinet minister performs well if he or she has the motivation, vigor, strength, ability, and skills to address the parliament, the press and the audience, stakeholders, and policy makers at the ministry.

With that general prototype of a good cabinet minister in mind, the interviewees can be asked about who lived up to the expectations and who did not. These were the cabinet ministers

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<sup>102</sup> “Moet zijn dossiers kennen, verbaal begaafd zijn en gevoel voor beeldvorming hebben.”

<sup>103</sup> “Een goed en adequaat boegbeeld zijn voor het departement naar zowel financiën als TK, bijdragen aan het overdragen van dat wat voor die partij belangrijk is. Rechtstreeks kunnen communiceren met de bezorgde burger.”

<sup>104</sup> “Een Minister is goed als hij zijn programma dat in het regeerakkoord staat weet uit te voeren, als hij het beleid verder kan helpen, als hij politiek overeind blijft in de media. (...) Als je je beleid weet uit te voeren dan ben je sterk. De allerbelangrijkste voorwaarde om in alledrie de domeinen te slagen, is dat je een sterke persoonlijkheid bent. Authentiek.”

that fit the prototype of a good cabinet minister according to inner-circle experts (the two HPC cabinet ministers are displayed in bold font):

1. Wouter Bos, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Finance (mentioned in 7 interviews)
2. **Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Minister of Justice** (7x)
3. Piet Hein Donner, Minister of Social Affairs (4x)
4. Camiel Eurlings, Minister of Traffic and Water (3x)
5. Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister, Minister of General Affairs (2x)
6. Ab Klink, Minister of Healthcare, Wellbeing and Sports (2x)
7. Maria van der Hoeven, Minister of Economic Affairs (1x)
8. Guusje ter Horst, Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (1x)
9. Bert Koenders, Minister of Development Cooperation (1x)
10. Eberhard van der Laan, Minister of Living, Neighborhoods and Integration (1x)
11. **Ronald Plasterk, Minister of Education, Culture, and Science** (1x)

The five cabinet ministers who were not mentioned were Jacqueline Cramer, Gerda Verburg, Eimert van Middelkoop, Andre Rouvoet, and Maurice Verhagen.

The inner-circle experts considered Guusje ter Horst, Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the best-performing female cabinet minister. Her name was mentioned three times. One interviewee was convinced that Verburg was a good female cabinet minister. Six interviewees were unable or unwilling to name any female cabinet ministers whom they considered good cabinet ministers.

The cabinet ministers who did not at all fit the prototype of a good cabinet minister were the following (the two LPC cabinet ministers are displayed in bold font):

1. **Eimert van Middelkoop** (mentioned by 6 interviewees);



2. **Jacqueline Cramer** (6x)
3. Maria van der Hoeven (5x)<sup>105</sup>
4. Andre Rouvoet (3x)
5. Ab Klink (2x)
6. Jan Peter Balkenende (1x)
7. Guusje ter Horst (1x)
8. Ronald Plasterk (1x)

**Inner-circle Opinions about the Performance of Ernst Hirsch Ballin.** The opinions regarding Hirsch Ballin's performance were unanimously positive. None of the respondents named him as one of the three lowest-performing cabinet ministers, while a majority of them named him as one of the best cabinet ministers. Between 2008 and 2010, inner-circle experts thought that Hirsch Ballin was an exceptional cabinet minister. A secretary-general mentioned that the cabinet minister seemed "reliable in the long run," as "people can trust him to make all the right decisions," "he knows what he is talking about," and "he is an expert in his field."<sup>106</sup> Many other inner-circle experts agreed that Hirsch Ballin seemed highly reliable, more so than other cabinet ministers. This shows that not only Dutch citizens, but experts too, believed in him as a successful cabinet minister. The evidence points in the direction of a link between operational performance and public credibility.

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<sup>105</sup>Two inner-circle experts pointed out that Maria van der Hoeven was not doing well at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, but they mentioned that she did do a good job at the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science during the previous cabinet term.

<sup>106</sup>All quotes by Secretary General of one of the Ministries, ZR, January, 2009.

A few of the inner circle respondents mentioned that steering the Ministry of Justice and maintaining the policy portfolio of the Ministry of Justice can be challenging for a cabinet minister. The stakes are high, and decisions are often complicated. According to an interviewee at the Ministry of Justice,<sup>107</sup> Hirsch Ballin knew how important it was to find a balance between the battles within the cabinet (for example, a battle with the Cabinet Minister of Finance in order to secure the Ministry of Justice budget) and Parliament (responding to inevitable parliamentary dismay and trying to minimize it).

In the case of the Ministry of Justice, Parliament's dismay was often caused by so-called "incidents" that make the job of the Cabinet Minister of Justice extra challenging. Examples of such incidents (or scandals) are the "Schiphol Fire" in 2005 (Piet Hein Donner resigned due to his political responsibility as the current Cabinet Minister of Justice) and the "Savannah" case (a young child became a victim of domestic violence and child abuse, and the Ministry of Justice was blamed for failing to protect the child). Incidents are picked up by the Parliament and the press, and can therefore grow out of proportion quickly. As a result, Cabinet Ministers of Justice (like Hirsch Ballin and his predecessor Piet Hein Donner) must spend a substantial amount of their time calming down inflamed topics by quickly offering the press and Parliament the requested information, while trying to minimize the damage caused to the image of the cabinet minister and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>108</sup> An inner-circle expert who worked in the Parliament throughout Hirsch Ballin's term stated that the Ministry of Justice was doing well because of Hirsch Ballin's talents:

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<sup>107</sup> JS, March 2009.

<sup>108</sup> Inner circle interviewee JS, March 2009, and also ZS, April 2009.

He is at the political steering wheel of a difficult department. But he is the best and smartest cabinet minister of them all. He knows politics and he is popular in wider circles than his own party. His ability to keep an incident-sensitive department in calm surroundings is great.<sup>109</sup>

A top policy advisor and CDA member who worked at the Prime Minister's office at the time of the interview, and who knew Hirsch Ballin both personally and professionally, stated that Hirsch Ballin was the number-one best cabinet minister of the Balkenende IV cabinet:

He is authoritative in his field of expertise.<sup>110</sup> He knows how to bridge the gap between policy preparation and decision-making (external implementation). A Ministry of Justice needs someone like Hirsch Ballin, who can step outside the circle of the cabinet and collaborate with all partners in the field of security. Partners such as the police and municipalities are key stakeholders who need to be consulted in order to include their much-needed expertise in the decision-making process.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> In Dutch: JF: "Hij heeft een moeilijk departement. Maar hij is de beste cabinet Minister en de slimste van allemaal. Hij kent de politiek goed. Ook boven partijniveau is hij erg geliefd. Hij houdt een incidentgevoelig departement in een rustig vaarwater, dat is knap."

<sup>110</sup> In Dutch: "Gezagsvol op zijn terrein."

<sup>111</sup> Interviewee ZR, in September 2008 and December 2009. The interviewer asked in Dutch: "Wat bedoelt u precies met verbinding tussen beleidsvoorbereiding en beleidimplementatie?" The interviewee explained in Dutch: "Je kunt wel bedenken om de criminaliteit met 25% terug te dringen en dat je vooral recidive moet verminderen, dat is dan beleidsvoorbereiding, dat is besloten, punt. Dan is de vraag hoe je dat gaat uitvoeren op gemeentelijk niveau? Dat betekent dat gemeenten bereid moeten zijn in hun sociale voorzieningen, dat is vooral arbeidsbemiddeling en welzijn, ex-gevangenen, gedetineerden ook op te pakken. En vooral in het instrumentarium arbeidsbemiddeling. Die slag maken tussen analyse, besluit en vervolgens doen, en andere moeten het doen.. Daarin gaat het hem zitten. En op die eerste twee kun je briljant zijn, maar als je die derde stap niet weet te bereiken, gebeurt er niks in de werkelijkheid. Vandaar dat Hirsch Ballin daadwerkelijk iets bereikt." Then the interviewer asked in Dutch: "Wat is de grootste verdienste van de afgelopen twee jaar van Hirsch Ballin?" and the interviewee explained in Dutch: "Het tot stand brengen in bijna alle gemeenten, van zogenoemde veiligheidshuizen. En het verankeren van veiligheid op lokaal, gemeentelijk niveau." Interviewee ZR, in September 2008 and December 2009.

The interviewee at Hirsch Ballin's ministry<sup>112</sup> stated that he made the right decisions and also chose the right priorities. The interviewee praised the cabinet minister's efforts to make a difference in politics. The difference Hirsch Ballin made was inspired by his own beliefs and values:

When I say that the current Cabinet Minister of Justice [Hirsch Ballin] is the best cabinet minister of them all, it's not just because I work for him. I say it because he is one of the strongest cabinet ministers of the cabinet. (...) A priority that was introduced exclusively by this cabinet minister is (...) the reopening of closed cases in Justice. The principal of "ne bis in idem"—do not punish twice for the same crime—and the fact that at some point a case needs to be closed, were important issues this cabinet minister wanted to straighten out. He believed it was important for the people's trust in our State of Law.<sup>113</sup>

In another interview, the term "X-factor" was mentioned. An inner-circle expert who worked as a spin-doctor in the Parliament at the time of the interview, stated:

Ernst Hirsch Ballin does not have the X-factor called sex appeal, but he does have the other X-factor: an experienced, trustworthy, and solid image. As a citizen, you don't know what Ernst Hirsch Ballin is talking about, but you know that he will be doing the right thing.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Interviewee JS in March 2009.

<sup>113</sup> In Dutch: JWS: "Als ik moet kiezen denk ik dat ik de minister van Justitie een goede vind, dat zeg ik niet omdat ik voor hem werk, maar omdat hij één van de sterkste ministers van dit kabinet is. (...) Als ik nu een kenmerk mag noemen van een speerpunt dat echt alleen van deze Minister afkomt, dan is dat de herziening van afgedane strafzaken. Het beginsel van ne bis in idem, geen twee keer straffen voor hetzelfde vergrijp en eens moet er een einde aan een geschil komen, de strafrechter oordeelt en dan is ook het boek dicht. Het is deze Minister die vanuit de gedachte van vertrouwen in de rechtsstaat aan beide punten gemorreld heeft." JS, March 2009.

<sup>114</sup> Inner-circle expert FF, July 2008.

Interviewee FF may have explained the missing link between Hirsch Ballin's professor-like appearance and his relatively higher credibility: He is perceived as reliable because he appears competent, even though citizens may not always understand what he is talking about on television. The interviewee at the ministry whose job it was to advise and train Hirsch Ballin on public communication pointed out the cabinet minister's soft spot is spinning his image. He compared Hirsch Ballin to Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations:

Well, Guusje ter Horst is a political animal of the first kind, including both positive and negative elements of the political style. [Hirsch Ballin] is exactly the opposite. The people perceive him as a professor and a scientist; competent without a doubt. Admirable. But after a sentence and a half, he loses his audience. And we also think he looks odd and walks a little strange.<sup>115</sup>

When it comes to communication through the media, the interviewee pointed out that Hirsch Ballin's strongest assets were his competent and expert appearance. In sum, all inner-circle experts were very positive about Hirsch Ballin's operational performance, and 7 out of 12 thought that he was one of the best cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet (2007–2010). Also, possibly more striking than all of the compliments directed toward Hirsch Ballin is the lack of criticism the inner-circle experts brought to the table. None of the inner-circle experts said anything negative about Hirsch Ballin, despite the interviewer asking multiple questions inquiring about aspects of his performance, such as: "what could the cabinet minister have done better?" and "what did not go as planned during the cabinet term?" All of the other cabinet

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<sup>115</sup> JS, march 2009. Original text in Dutch: "Nou Guusje ter Horst is een politiek dier van de eerste orden met al z'n positieve en negatieve kanten. Deze minister is precies het omgekeerde. Hij wordt door de bevolking gepercipiëerd als een wetenschapper, kundig zonder twijfel, te waarderen. Maar na anderhalve zin raakt de bevolking hem kwijt. En we vinden hem er gek uitzien en hij loopt ook een beetje gek."

ministers who were named as one of the three best, including Wouter Bos, whose name came up seven times (just like Hirsch Ballin's), were at least criticized by one or two of the inner-circle experts.

Now, since over 70% of the LISS panel respondents (citizens) thought that Hirsch Ballin had what it takes to be a higher-credibility cabinet minister, and since perceived competence was the strongest asset in his credibility profile, it appears as though there might be a link between operational performance (competences of a cabinet minister as seen through the eyes of inner-circle experts) and one of the elements of public credibility: competence of a cabinet minister as perceived by citizens. Does this hypothesis hold when the inner-circle interview methods are applied to the other higher-credibility cabinet minister, Ronald Plasterk?

**Inner-circle Opinions about Ronald Plasterk.** Only one out of 12 inner-circle experts mentioned Plasterk as one of the three best cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. Interviewee HR, a Director General at Plasterk's own Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, was not at all satisfied with the performance of Plasterk. HR placed Plasterk second on the list of worst-performing cabinet ministers, closely followed by Balkenende (in first place) and Cramer (in third place). RM, a director at the same ministry who was interviewed in October 2010, disagreed with his supervisor by choosing Plasterk as one of the three best-performing cabinet ministers. The list of the "least-performing ministers" of HR includes two cabinet ministers on the list of "best-performing cabinet ministers" of MR. This demonstrates that the opinions of different policy advisors on ministerial performance at the highest levels of a ministry can be strongly divided. What does this say about the performance of Plasterk, from an inner-circle perspective? Contrary to Hirsch Ballin's inner-circle image, Plasterk's inner-circle

image is not exclusively positive. Plasterk somehow cultivated supporters and friends but also opponents and enemies within the ministry.

An interviewee who worked as a communications advisor for a party leader in the Parliament mentioned Plasterk as an example of what citizens might want:

In the long run [citizens] want someone who simply solves problems, who is reliable and solid. Even boring is okay. But in the short run, they want someone who is sexy, like (...) [Ronald] Plasterk. (...) But he's not making policies. He just attends receptions, and talk shows, and does some other little fun TV things. He even has his own magazine.<sup>116</sup>

Apparently, interviewee FF has come to the conclusion that Plasterk was an underperformer when it came to policy making at the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science. According to another interviewee, FJ, the minister was making policies, but they simply lacked visibility.

Contrary to interview comments about Hirsch Ballin, whose inner-circle image seemed flawless, the interview comments on Plasterk are rather divided. The interview comments can be summarized as follows. According to the interviewees, Plasterk was:

- a well performing cabinet minister (MR's opinion) and a poorly performing cabinet minister (HR's opinion);
- a cabinet minister who is "sexy," but an underperformer when it comes to policy making (FF's opinion); and

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<sup>116</sup> FF, July 2008. Original text in Dutch: Wat willen burgers van een bewindspersoon? "Op de langere termijn willen burgers een bewindspersoon die simpelweg problemen oplost, die betrouwbaar en degelijk is. Saai mag ook. Maar op de korte termijn willen ze een minister die sexy is, zo iemand als Heinsbroek of Plasterk. (...) Maar beleid maakt hij niet. Hij bezoekt alleen recepties, doet Zomergasten, en leuke andere TV-dingetjes. Hij heeft zelfs een eigen blad."

- a good, nice, smart, and competent cabinet minister whose policies are too invisible (FJ's opinion).

While Hirsch Ballin's case seemed to point in the direction of a link between operational performances, as seen by the inner circle, and public credibility, as seen by regular citizens, Plasterk's case points in a different direction. After all, Hirsch Ballin did not receive any negative feedback during the interviews, while interviewees who talked about Plasterk had serious doubts about several aspects of his operational performance in general, and his policy performance in particular (see also Chapter 13 for more inner circle opinions on Ronald Plasterk in the context of the style and skill assessments). In other words, there are two higher-credibility cabinet ministers, and only one of them seems to have a flawless inner-circle image. Interviewing inner-circle expert opinions about the two lower-credibility cases can clarify some of the doubt. Therefore, the rest of this chapter features the performance of Eimert van Middelkoop, Jacqueline Cramer, and Guusje ter Horst, as assessed by inner circle experts.

**Inner-circle Opinions about Eimert van Middelkoop.** None of the 12 inner-circle experts mentioned Van Middelkoop as one of the three best cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. Instead, Van Middelkoop was mentioned on the “worst cabinet minister list” twice. “Van Middelkoop was not a star,” said a top advisor at the Ministry of Health, Wellbeing, and Sports.<sup>117</sup> Another policy advisor, who worked at the Ministry of Justice at the time of the interview, agreed. When asked who were the three worst-performing cabinet ministers, he answered: “Maria van der Hoeven, Jacqueline Cramer...and I think Van Middelkoop is somewhat of a disappointment as well.” Interviewee SWJ explained that Van Middelkoop

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<sup>117</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert BM on February 17, 2009: “Ik vond Van Middelkoop ook geen ster.”



“lacked intuition and timing with regard to using the right tone of voice: “But this is based on incidents.... Let me rephrase: especially because of his experience [as a politician] it is strange that he would make these beginner’s mistakes.”<sup>118</sup>

Interviewee KG, who worked directly for Van Middelkoop as a political and communications advisor during his term as Cabinet Minister of Defense, knew him well before the Balkenende IV cabinet was formed. KG believes that a cabinet minister performs well if he or she realizes policy goals and remains standing in a political sense and also in the media.<sup>119</sup> When asked to compare Van Middelkoop to his prototype of a good cabinet minister, KG expressed some positive feedback on Van Middelkoop’s performance. A summary of his positive comments is as follows:

- “I think that Defense under Van Middelkoop performed better than ever.”<sup>120</sup>
- “I think that we were having a very decent army.”<sup>121</sup>
- “He was respected and liked internationally [in NATO circles].”<sup>122</sup>
- “He performed at the same level as the other cabinet ministers.”

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<sup>118</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert SWJ in March 2009: “(...) Nou ik denk toch dat Van Middelkoop toch wel een klein beetje een teleurstelling is.” Interviewer: wat gaat er mis bij Van Middelkoop? SWJ: “Niet op het juiste moment het juiste gevoel voor welke toon hij kan aanslaan. Dit is natuurlijk gebaseerd op incidenten. Maar laat ik het anders zeggen: juist vanuit zijn ervaringen is het raar dat hij tegen dit soort beginnersfouten aanloopt.”

<sup>119</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Een Minister is goed als hij zijn programma dat in het regeerakkoord staat weet uit te voeren, als hij het beleid verder kan helpen, als hij politiek overeind blijft en in de media.”

<sup>120</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Waar het uiteindelijk om ging, was Uruzgan en over wereldwijd actief kunnen zijn op 3 plaatsen in de wereld. Ik denk dat voor Van Middelkoop nog nooit zoveel is gepresteerd.”

<sup>121</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “We zaten in Bosnie, we hebben piraterij op poten gezet. Ik denk dat je eindelijk een krijgsmacht had waarvoor die bedoeld was.”

<sup>122</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Van Middelkoop had internationaal een geweldige relatie. Hij zat altijd de ... bijeenkomsten voor over Uruzgan in Navo verband. Hij was daar zeer gevierd. Hij lag daar uitermate goed. Niemand die dat ooit hoort of weet. Hij was een intellectueel die met kop en schouders boven de rest uitstak in internationaal verband, Ik hem hem in 4 jaar lang enorm zien groeien.”

- “He was simply a good cabinet minister.”<sup>123</sup>

Interviewee KG observed some of Van Middelkoop’s shortcomings as well:

- “At first, [his performance in the Parliament] went all wrong. He was a typical parliamentarian. He didn’t take his role well.”<sup>124</sup>
- “The image of a playful, giddy, babbling man was difficult to get rid of.”<sup>125</sup>
- “[He] had a few unfortunate moments [during interviews with journalists]. No cabinet minister can afford to have any of those.”<sup>126</sup>
- “Van Middelkoop has humor, but a cabinet minister can’t get away with being giddy.”<sup>127</sup>

Van Middelkoop’s advisor, KG, who admitted that Van Middelkoop had trouble shaping his public image, believed that the cabinet minister was competent and respected behind the scenes. Van Middelkoop was reportedly respected by his closest advisors, other cabinet ministers in the Netherlands, and in international political circles. He was a knowledgeable policy maker and was thoroughly acquainted with the laws and regulations that applied to his policy field.

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<sup>123</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Het is gewoon een open, eerlijke man, met humor. Het beeld is van de brekebeen, maar de waarheid ligt anders. Hij is van hetzelfde niveau. Het is gewoon een goede cabinet Minister geweest.”

<sup>124</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “[Zijn optreden in de Tweede Kamer] ging in het begin helemaal fout. Hij was een parlementarier pur sang. Hij nam zijn rol niet goed.”

<sup>125</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “Als je eenmaal dat beeld hebt gewekt, van een speelse, jolige brabbelende man, dan kom je daar in de Tweede Kamer moeilijk meer van af.”

<sup>126</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “[Van Middelkoop heeft een ] paar ongelukkige momenten gehad [tijdens interviews met journalisten]. Dat kun je je niet permitteren.”

<sup>127</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “Hij vond Defensie prachtig, maar het was niet het goede departement. Van Middelkoop heeft gevoel voor humor, maar cabinet ministers komen er niet mee weg om jolig te zijn.”

Furthermore, KG stated that Van Middelkoop had the ability to learn from his mistakes quickly, although media mistakes are difficult to overcome. KG explained that the media can make or break a cabinet minister. The loss of creditworthiness seemed to make it impossible for Van Middelkoop to recover his image after making a few public mistakes, one of which happened during a famous interview in his back yard in 2008. According to the inner-circle expert, the negative image overshadowed the ministry, the cabinet, the policies and all of the good things Van Middelkoop had reportedly accomplished during his term.<sup>128</sup> KG mentioned that he would give Van Middelkoop 8 points out of 10 for being a good cabinet minister, but then he remembered that his definition of “a good cabinet minister” contained not only policy making and dealing with politics, but also maintaining a good media image: “I should actually give him only 7 out of 10 points, because he lacked the third requirement of performance. What counts is more than just the content of a cabinet minister’s work. Image matters, too.”<sup>129</sup>

**Expert Opinions on Operational Performance: Reflection.** Studying the performance of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Ronald Plasterk, and Eimert van Middelkoop, as assessed by inner-circle experts, has led to evidence that partly supports and partly rejects the statement that there is a link between public credibility and ministerial performance. Based on the case of Plasterk (an HPC cabinet minister whose inner-circle experts believed that his policy performance was

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<sup>128</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Alles wat burgers weten komt tot ze via de pers. Ik loop al heel lang mee in het wereldje en zie en hoor vaak dingen in de media die gewoon niet waar zijn, die goedkoop zijn, die gemakkelijk zijn. Ze rekenen bewindslieden niet af op hun prestaties. De krant verkoopt een schandaaltje. Als je een belangrijk dossier binnenhaalt, dan wordt er vooral gezegd dat de oppositie tegen was, niemand heeft oog voor de prestatie op zich. Aan de andere kant, televisie is genadeloos. Omdat TV alle zwakke punten blootlegt. In een paar seconden moet je er zijn. Gaat het mis, dan kan dat je jaren achtervolgen.”

<sup>129</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Als je kijkt Van Middelkoop’s taak: uitvoering van artikel 100 (doel #4) , dan zou ik hem een 8 geven. Maar het is eigenlijk een 7, gelet op wat ik typeerde als een goede Minister, want hij komt op het derde punt tekort. Het is natuurlijk meer dan alleen de inhoud. Het gaat er ook om hoe je overkomt.”

lacking) and Van Middelkoop (an LPC cabinet minister whose inner-circle experts believed that his policy performance was strong), it seems that there is no link between public credibility and policy performance.

But operational performance, as mentioned in the general introduction, is a wider term that refers to the execution and accomplishment of all the work of a cabinet minister in the Netherlands. Parts of a minister's operational performance other than policy performance may still be somehow related to the ability of cabinet ministers to attain higher public credibility, since both HPC cabinet ministers occurred in the "best ministers" list, and both LPC cabinet ministers occurred on the "worst ministers" list. Depending on how interviewees defined "performance by a good cabinet minister," they included or excluded certain cabinet ministers on or from their "best" and "worst" lists. For example, those interviewees who strongly valued the ambassador's role of a cabinet minister, admired Ronald Plasterk more than those who preferred a cabinet minister who is a policy making expert.

Although it looks like policy-making accomplishments have little or nothing to do with the ability of cabinet ministers to attain higher credibility, at this point caution is required when making concluding remarks. Not only are the policy makers at the ministries who form part of the inner circle most likely biased because of where they stand (in the ministry, hardly a place from which policy performance of a cabinet minister can be observed objectively), they are also just 10 people (2 out of 12 were parliamentarians). Ten is a small number of respondents, despite the fact that they are considered experts. However, because of their experience, knowledge of policies, and political neutrality as civil servants, no 10 experts could have answered the interview questions more effectively than they did. Furthermore, it would have been very difficult to arrange more inner-circle interviews at the top levels of the ministries, because the

confidential character of the interview questions made some interviewees reluctant to cooperate. Also, only a few people at each ministry have daily face-to-face contact with the cabinet ministers for a period long enough to get to know each other. Moreover, the time-consuming method of in-depth interviewing made it particularly difficult to pursue the interviews.

Despite methodological difficulties, the interviews discussed throughout this chapter created a strong foundation for the next step in the process of researching links between operational performance and public credibility: Operational performance in general (which refers to all aspects of a cabinet minister's job) needs to be researched separately from policy performance (which refers only to the policy-making aspects of the job). Also, operational performance needs to be investigated in a way that includes all of the experts' definitions of a "good cabinet minister." Therefore, there are two variables that will make up the variable of "operational performance" from now on:

- Ministerial style and skill profiles. This includes all aspects of a cabinet minister's job. The style and skill assessment instrument is designed to find out what the strengths and weaknesses are of each of the selected cabinet ministers. One of the skill sets covers policy performance, while the other three refer to skills needed to deal with politics (the parliament), the media, and the policy fields (professionals and stakeholders).
- Policy goal realization. Here, the outcome of the policy-making efforts of cabinet ministers will be investigated through desk-research.

Part IV includes a discussion of each of the methods used for further research, which includes both of the above two performance variables, and a variable to further investigate media appearance of cabinet ministers.

### **Conclusions for Part III: The Tip of the Iceberg**

What makes the difference between HPC cabinet ministers and LPC cabinet ministers? Is it media appearance or operational performance of cabinet ministers as assessed by inner-circle experts? Chapter 7 has described the first clues that help to understand why Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer were LPC cabinet ministers and why others were able to attain more public credibility. The HPC cabinet ministers had more notoriety: Their names appeared more often in the headlines of source newspaper articles. But a fuller, more in-depth understanding of the variable of media appearance is still lacking, since no clues were found to support the statement that the content of newspaper articles makes a difference in the credibility of cabinet ministers. For this reason, I will focus on the content of media articles for each of the five selected cabinet ministers in Parts V and VI, by investigating the communicated personalities of these cabinet ministers as they were shown through press articles.

Chapter 8 described the results of a dozen interviews with inner-circle experts who were either working in the Parliament or at ministries. Those working at ministries were either responsible for the media appearance of cabinet ministers (communications advisors), their policy performance (secretaries general and directors general), or both, in the case of political advisors. Chapter 8 has shown that based on the case of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, there seems to be a link between public credibility and performance. After all, Hirsch Ballin was most often called the best minister of the cabinet, and he and his work were praised by a large majority of all inner-circle experts, with none of them qualifying him as a cabinet minister with any performance flaws. However, based on the case of Ronald Plasterk, the second HPC cabinet minister, one has to conclude that operational performance as assessed by inner-circle experts makes little difference: Plasterk's name only occurred on the "best cabinet minister" list once, and some of

his own top policy advisors and managers of his ministry thought that he did a less than average job with regard to the tasks of a cabinet minister that take place at the ministry itself. The only aspect on which the inner-circle experts agreed was that Plasterk did an outstanding job when it came to addressing the media. Plasterk's case provides a fairly convincing argument that there may be a link between certain elements of operational performance, according to inner-circle experts, and attaining higher public credibility. The policy-making element of operational performance is certainly not one of them. After all, one of the HPC cabinet ministers (Plasterk) was criticized by several inner-circle experts with regard to his policy-making accomplishments, while one of the LPC cabinet ministers (Van Middelkoop) was praised for his policy-making skills and knowledge.

In sum, the media content analysis and inner-circle interviews of Part III have uncovered only the tip of an iceberg that the factors contributing to the public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands likely constitute. There could be much more underneath, and an in-depth study in which the communicated personalities, ministerial style and skill profiles, and policy goal realization of each cabinet minister are researched separately offers the best chance of finding more answers.

Prior to discussing further details about the selected cabinet ministers in Parts V and VI, the research design requires attention. Part IV is entirely dedicated to discussing the research methods for the analysis of communicated personality profiles, style and skill profiles, and policy goal realization of the five selected cabinet ministers. These methods will help to uncover more of the iceberg than just the tip: How do cabinet ministers in the Netherlands attain higher public credibility?

# PART 4

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## Understanding Credibility Further Methods







#### **PART IV: UNDERSTANDING CREDIBILITY FURTHER—METHODS**

In Part I, it became clear how citizens in the Netherlands define the public credibility of cabinet ministers. Part II showed which cabinet ministers have succeeded most and which ones have succeeded least at attaining public credibility, based on which five cabinet ministers were selected for further research. Part III demonstrated a first attempt to understand public credibility by looking at the two explanatory variables: media appearance, defined as the number of, and balance between, negative and positive comments in newspaper articles, and operational performance of cabinet ministers as defined by inner-circle experts, based on the ideal, typical “good cabinet minister.”

The remaining question is: To what extent is higher public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands linked to communicated personalities (media appearance), ministerial style and skills, and policy goal realization (operational performance)? Each of the selected cabinet ministers will be the object of further investigation in Parts V and VI of this dissertation. Part IV discusses the methods and instruments with which communicated personalities, style and skill profiles, and goal realization by cabinet ministers will be measured.

With regard to the first main variable, media appearance, the question of which research methods to choose seemed difficult to answer at first. However, upon closer inspection, there was only one instrument that could help measure how the cabinet ministers have communicated their personalities and how others have perceived and reported their characters. This instrument is called the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), as used by Aubrey Immelman (2004). This method is based on decades of research in (political) psychology, and offers a mature analytical framework as well as a research instrument that includes a set of rules for researchers to secure validity and reliability of the outcomes around the world.

With regard to the second main variable, operational performance, there are two aspects that need to be researched so as to measure the impact of the variable: Operational performance includes both how skilled cabinet ministers are and what they accomplish. It includes both their talents and their actual success. Talents can be measured by means of a small N expert survey on ministerial style and skill profiles, while success can be measured by means of desk research on policy goal realization.

The sources that were consulted in order to analyze communicated personalities of cabinet ministers, are newspaper articles (and occasionally television and radio materials). The sources used for the study of the style and skill of cabinet ministers, are inner circle interviews. And lastly, the sources used for desk research in order to find out who realized policy goals to parliament satisfaction, are Accountability Reports written by the cabinet, and (written reports of) parliament debates.

Chapter 9 discusses the methodological aspects of the MIDC (communicated personalities), chapter 10 discusses the style and skill assessment, and chapter 11 discusses how policy goal realization can be measured.

The angles that help studying the performance of cabinet ministers are the following:

1. The communicated personality profile of each cabinet minister shows how they have presented themselves, and have been presented, through the media;
2. The style and skill profile of each cabinet minister shows his or her style and skills;
3. The policy goal realization of each cabinet minister shows to what extent he or she has realized his or her policy goals according to cabinet and Parliament.

The primary aim of each part of the research project is to gather information about aspects of a cabinet minister's media appearance and operational performance, in order to find patterns of public credibility by comparing the HPC cabinet ministers in terms of these aspects of media appearance and operational performance, to LPC and MPC cabinet ministers. In case of the MIDC (*communicated personalities*), the research instrument already existed and was modified for use in this dissertation, while in case of the style and skill assessment, the research instrument had to be build and validated for the purpose of this dissertation only. All methods are used to gather opinions from people who are more informed about the cabinet ministers than the average citizen. Research populations are small (between 15 and 100) and the data are mostly qualitative.

## Chapter 9: Media appearance Measured as Communicated Personality Patterns: Methods

The first angle from which the cabinet ministers will be studied concerns their communicated personalities. These are the personalities they showed when communicating through mass media sources such as newspapers and television. Since the information about cabinet ministers upon which the respondents of the LISS panel have based their opinions has most likely been filtered by the media, analyzing the media appearance of cabinet ministers (in addition to the more quantitative media appearance as discussed in Chapter 4 of Part II) seems a necessity in order to begin understanding their public credibility.

Out of many media analysis instruments common in political science that could have been used to gather information about the appearance of cabinet ministers in the media, the most suitable instrument for studying the personality of public persons was developed by Immelman (2004). His instrument, the MIDC,<sup>130</sup> can be used to analyze and diagnose the personalities of target persons at a distance (see also De Landtsheer, 2009).

Immelman's MIDC will be used here, in slightly adapted form, to analyze the communicated personalities of the previously selected cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. The adaptation of the MIDC from Immelman's method mainly concerns the way data are interpreted. The aim of this dissertation is not to diagnose the *biographic personalities* of Dutch cabinet ministers. Rather, the aim is to diagnose the *publicly communicated personalities*

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<sup>130</sup> Immelman (1998, '99, 2002, 2003) and Steinberg (1999) compiled the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), based on the DSM III and DSM IV. The work of Theodore Millon "provides a sound foundation for conceptualizing and assessing political personality, classifying political personality types, and predicting political behavior" (Immelman, 2004, pp. 1–2). Millon's work can be found in many publications about personality research and personality prototypes: Millon, 1990, 1986a, 1986b, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 1998, 2000; Millon, Davis, & Millon, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985). Immelman adapted Millon's method (1969, 1986b, 1990, 1994a, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985) and developed an instrument to study personality patterns of political leaders.

of Dutch cabinet ministers. Immelman's MIDC (2004) will be described, discussed, and adjusted here in order to put the method to work in Parts V and VI of this dissertation.

**The Traditional MIDC by Immelman (2004).** Psychologists seek to understand the cognitive, emotional, and mental activities of individuals. When it comes to historical figures and present-day politicians, however, the distance between researchers and their respondents is not easy to overcome. Researchers cannot get close enough to their target persons to ask them about their thoughts, decisions, and motives. Besides, these matters are private and sometimes secret. However, with the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC, Immelman, 1993c, 1999, 2004), personality patterns can be revealed, even though the target person may not be available for comments. The research instrument enables researchers to “diagnose” any distant public figure psychologically through meta-analysis. According to Immelman (2004) and others, the MIDC has proven to be of great assistance to those who seek to understand leadership mechanisms.

Using the MIDC requires an analysis of written source materials, also called “semi-qualitative content analysis” (De Landtsheer et al., 2004, p. 81). Immelman (1996a) used meta-analysis (analysis of previously written material)<sup>131</sup> to draw a personality profile of political candidates, governors and presidents. His aim was threefold. First, the method was designed to discover which personality patterns all leaders or all successful leaders have in common. The second aim was understanding and explaining leadership behavior (see the 5-factor model applied to source materials on U.S. presidents by Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, & Ones, 1996, 2002,

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<sup>131</sup> Immelman (2004) explains: “I use the term meta-analysis because the personality profiles represent a synthesis of the observations of others, including biographers, psychobiographers, historians, psychohistorians, journalists, political analysts, and political psychologists.”

and Renshon, 1996b<sup>132</sup>; see also De Landtsheer, 2009). The third aim is to predict future leadership behavior (see, for example, Barber, 1992<sup>133</sup>). Immelman explains that the assessment procedure, termed psychodiagnostic meta analysis, involves an empirically based synthesis of diagnostically relevant content in biographical source materials. The process culminates in the construction of personality profiles intended to describe, explain, and predict leadership behavior in political contexts. (Immelman, 2002, p. 1)

Immelman's most common sources are biographies, newspaper articles, and interviews with the target person (a politician or historical figure<sup>134</sup>) or one of his or her acquaintances, but data can be found in additional sources as well.

**Design and Operationalization.** The term “communicated personalities” as it is used here has not been used in political science or political psychology before, so a definition is required. In this dissertation, it means “the political, governmental and personal character of a cabinet minister the way it is presented to the Dutch public throughout his or her cabinet term, through popular written media, on a daily basis.”

The shift from the traditional MIDC (by Immelman, 2004, and used in Belgium by De Vries and De Landtsheer, 2009) to the adapted version for use only in this dissertation was made because the traditional MIDC requires a number of high-quality biographical source materials. This requirement cannot be met in the Dutch case: At the time of the Dutch research project, the

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<sup>132</sup> Renshon draws a schema of presidential leadership qualities shaped by character.

<sup>133</sup> Barber, J. D. (1992). *The presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

<sup>134</sup> Most of Immelman's work concerns US presidents, governors, and foreign government leaders such as British Prime Minister Blair and French President Sarkozy. Most of the work of De Landtsheer concerns Belgian and Dutch politicians (see, for example, De Landtsheer & De Vries [2009]).

cabinet ministers (target persons) were still in office and there was a shortage of biographical material in book form about them. However, there were more than enough newspaper articles and written interviews to use as sources of information. Immelman (2004) allows researchers to use newspaper articles, but they must be complemented by other, more sustainable types of source materials.

However, since this dissertation reveals “communicated personalities” of target persons, not biographical personalities, this requirement becomes irrelevant. The aim is not truth-finding, but image-finding. Therefore, newspaper articles and television reports about the cabinet ministers will serve as valid source materials.

Understanding just leadership is not the aim of this dissertation. Understanding public credibility of cabinet ministers is the intention. The public appearance of cabinet ministers is more important in understanding their public credibility (or lack thereof) than who they are. Understanding credibility requires understanding the cabinet minister’s communicated personality.

Of all methods discussed in this part, Immelman’s MIDC (2004) demands the most elaborate explanation and discussion. It is a complicated method, and the fact that some adjustments had to be made to increase validity of the method in the Dutch context requires even more discussion. However, the length of this chapter does not indicate that the MIDC method and the analysis based upon it are superior to the other methods discussed here in Part IV; all methods used for analysis in Parts V and VI have equal value. All data, no matter with which method or instrument they were gathered, have an equal chance of contributing to the answer to the main question of this dissertation: How do we develop an understanding of public credibility?



The MIDC was chosen to complement the other methods and instruments in this dissertation because it can help in understanding how cabinet ministers have presented themselves through the media, how journalists have reported on their actions, and how this may have shaped their public and political images.

**Data Collection and Coding.** For data collection, relevant sources need be gathered first, after which quotes from those sources need to be selected. Sources and quotes are relevant when they contain information about the target person's attributes. Attributes are expressive behavior (A), interpersonal conduct (B), cognitive style (C), mood/temperament (D), or self-image (E). When quotes are selected, the coding process can start. During the coding process, in which the researcher codes the relevant pieces of text from the biographical and other sources, the attributes are the first to be distinguished (see Table 14). Every relevant quote fits in attribute A, B, C, D, or E.

Table 14

*MIDC Scoring Sheet*<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Table 14 shows the scoring sheet on which eight attributes are distinguished and displayed (first column). The first row shows the personality scales of the MIDC, which are drawn from the DSM-III and DSM-IV. Scale 1A refers to the Dominant Pattern. Dominant leaders can be asserting (gradation a), controlling (gradation b), or aggressive (gradation c). The disturbed variant of this pattern is called "sadistic" (DSM-III-R, Appendix A).

Scale 1B refers to leaders with a Dauntless pattern, who are often venturesome (gradation a), dissenting (b), or aggrandizing (c). A disturbed dauntless person is called antisocial (DSM-IV, 301.7). Scale 2 refers to the ambitious pattern, which can be found within confident (a), self-serving (b), or exploitative (c) individuals. The disturbed variant of this pattern is called narcissism (DSM-IV, 301.81).

Scale 3 refers to outgoing individuals, who can be congenial (a), gregarious (b), and/or impulsive (c). The disturbed variant of this pattern shows a histrionic character (DSM-IV, 301.50).

Scale 4 (accommodating pattern) can be diagnosed with people who are cooperative (a), agreeable (b), and/or submissive (c). The disturbed variant of this pattern refers to the dependent personality disorder (DSM-IV, 301.6).

Scale 5A (aggrieved pattern) and 5B (contentious pattern) are shown by respectively unassuming and resolute people (gradation a), self-denying and oppositional people (gradation b), and self-defeating and negativistic people (gradation c). Disorders are described in the DSM-III-R, Appendix A (5A) and DSM-III-R, 301.84 (5A: passive aggressive).

	Scale																																
	1A			1B			2			3			4			5A			5B			6			7			8			9		
	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	d	e	d
A	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	4
B	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	4
C	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	4
D	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	4
E	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	4

*Note:* Copyright Aubrey Immelman (2004).

The second step of the coding process is to distinguish the scale: 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 8 or 9. Every scale refers to a pattern. Scale 1A, for example, refers to the dominant pattern, scale 1B refers to the dauntless pattern, scale 2 refers to the ambitious pattern, and so forth. If the quote says something about the target person's expressive behavior (attribute A) and refers to the target person's ambitions, the researcher may decide to code the quote as attribute A, scale 2 (the ambitious pattern).<sup>136</sup>

The third step of the coding process is to determine the intensity of the target person's appearance or behavior. In other words, after determining the attribute and the scale, the

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Scale 6 (conscientious), 7 (reticent), and 8 (retiring) are the other patterns with normal, adaptive variants. The disturbed variants refer to the obsessive-compulsive disorder (scale 6, DSM-IV, 301.4), avoidant disorder (scale 7, DSM-IV, 301.20), and schizoid disorder (scale 8, DSM-IV, 301.20).

<sup>136</sup> Prof. Immelman explains (personal communication on December 8, 2009) that using one quote to code two does not produce methodological shortcomings: "The key consideration is the psychological meaning implicit in the verbal content of the quote. Thus, after you have used a quote, it goes back into the pool of the universe of information about your target person, to be used as many times as it proves useful as evidence in support of each of the 170 diagnostic criteria (as an analogy, when you flip a coin, the coin has no memory of whether it landed heads or tails, so the profitability always remains 0.50 even after multiple consecutive heads or tails."

researcher needs to decide to which gradation the pattern is present. All personality patterns “occur on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive” (Immelman, 2004), “a” being normal, “b” being exaggerated, and “c” being maladaptive. On the score sheet in Table 14, gradation a receives one point, gradation b two points, and gradation c, being maladaptive, three points. Scales 1 through 8 are commonly used on the score sheet, but scale 9 (distrusting pattern) and 0 (erratic pattern) are per definition maladaptive or even disturbed patterns, which is shown on the score sheet. Target persons who score points on these patterns receive four or five points instead of one (gradation a), two (gradation b), or three (gradation c). Scale 9 refers to the paranoid disorder (DSM–IV, 301.0) and scale 0 to borderline disorder (DSM–IV, 301.83).<sup>137</sup> Less disturbed variants are suspicious individuals (scale 9) and unstable persons (scale 0).

Table 14 shows that every cell crossing a scale and an attribute is unique. Eight attributes and 12 scales make 170 different combinations, referred to by Immelman (2004) as alphanumerical codes or “diagnostic criteria.” In his manual, Immelman (2004) provided 170 different words to typify each of the diagnostic criteria.

During or after the scoring phase, a second researcher who is a psychologist and has experience with diagnostics and the DSM–IV checks the scoring results and helps interpret the data. The experienced psychologist is likely to question some of the diagnosed items. Researchers with less experience tend to score more items, because they do not have a deep understanding of the MIDC (Immelman, 2004). Discussion will help in shaping a valid (communicated) personality profile of the target person.

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<sup>137</sup> DSM stands for *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, developed and published under the aegis of the American Psychiatric Association. Five editions of the DSM–IV have thus far been published. The DSM is a classification of psychological disorders developed in order to diagnose patients and for research within psychology and psychiatry.

In the case of the adapted version of the instrument that led to the data discussed in this dissertation, there was only one initial coder. Therefore, intercoder reliability is less likely to be flawed. To overcome flaws in the reliability of the coding process over time (due to more experience in later stages of the coding process), the coding process was repeated once again after all source materials had been analyzed once. As a result, all source materials were coded with the same coding policies, and all analyses in Parts V and VI should be based on reliable data.

**Data Analysis.** The 12 scales are the spine of the MIDC framework. In addition, there are eight attributes or domains, displayed in Table 15.<sup>138</sup> Attribute A (expressive behavior) refers to a leader's "characteristic behavior: how the individual typically appears to others; what the individual knowingly or unknowingly reveals about him- or herself; what the individual wishes to think or know about him or her" (Immelman, 2004, p. 9).<sup>139</sup> Attribute B (interpersonal conduct) refers to the way a leader interacts with people surrounding him or her: fellow politicians, subordinated managers, friends, family, co-workers, citizens, and so on. This not only covers face-to-face interactions, but also communications through mass media. According to Immelman (2004, p. 9). this domain covers:

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<sup>138</sup> See also Appendix 16 for the *Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria Manual-II-Revisited* (Immelman, 2004). The appendices are available upon request via [evawisse@yahoo.com](mailto:evawisse@yahoo.com).

<sup>139</sup> Immelman (2004, p. 9), notes: "From *Disorders of Personality: DSM-IV and Beyond* (pp. 141–146) by T. Millon, 1996, New York: Wiley; *Toward a New Personology: An Evolutionary Model* (Chapter 5) by T. Millon, 1990, New York: Wiley; and *Personality and Its Disorders: A Biosocial Learning Approach* (p. 32) by T. Millon and G. S. Everly, Jr., 1985, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1996, © 1990, © 1985 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and Theodore Millon."

the attitudes that underlie, prompt and give shape to these actions; the methods by which the individual engages others to meet his or her needs; how the individual's actions impact on others; how the individual copes with social tensions and conflicts.<sup>140</sup>

Attribute C refers to the way the leader thinks and comes to (political) decisions. According to Immelman (2004, p. 9),<sup>141</sup> cognitive style is the way “the individual focuses and allocates attention, encodes and processes information, organizes thoughts, makes attributions and communicates reactions and ideas to others.” Attribute D is about the leader's mood and covers the way leaders typically display emotions. It refers to the “predominant character of an individual's affect and the intensity and frequency with which he or she expresses it” (Immelman, 2004, p. 9).<sup>142</sup> Attribute E, the last attribute relevant for meta-analysis, refers to “the individual's perception of self-as-object or the manner in which the individual overtly describes him- or herself” (Immelman, 2004, p. 9).<sup>143</sup> Table 15 below shows the attributes of the MIDC (attributes F, G, and H are not relevant for meta-analysis).

Table 15

*MIDC Attributes A through E*<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Idem.

<sup>141</sup> Idem.

<sup>142</sup> Idem.

<sup>143</sup> Idem.

<sup>144</sup> Millon distinguishes between structural attributes, which “represent a deeply embedded and relatively enduring template of imprinted memories, attributes, needs, fears, conflicts and so on, which guide experience and transform the nature of ongoing life events” (Millon, 1990, p. 147, quoted by Immelman, 2004, p. 4) and functional attributes, which “represent dynamic processes that transpire within the intrapsychic world and between the individual's self and psychosocial environment (Millon, 1990, p. 136, quoted by Immelman, 2004, p. 4). Structural attributes are the self-image (E) of a political leader and mood/temperament (D). Structural attributes G and H will not be used here. Functional attributes are expressive behavior (A: how does the target person appear to the public), interpersonal conduct (B: how does the target person show up when interaction with other persons is required), cognitive style (C: how does this person think and make decisions) and regulatory mechanisms (F: mechanisms of self-protection and conflict resolution).

For the study of leadership personality by means of meta-analysis, attributes F, G, and H are not used, because F and H are located at the “intrapsychic level of analysis” and G is located at the “phenomenological level” (Immelman,

Attribute A	Expressive behavior
Attribute B	Interpersonal conduct
Attribute C	Cognitive style
Attribute D	Mood/Temperament
Attribute E	Self-image
Attribute F	Regulatory mechanisms
Attribute G	Object representations
Attribute H	Morphologic organization

Following data collection, scoring, and a double check executed by an experienced psychologist, it is time to start interpreting the outcome. Which scales receive the highest scores and what is the gradation of the target person's scores? The conceptual framework (Appendix 16) and the MIDC Manual help the researcher in interpreting the results, and so does existing literature on the topic, which is referred to in the MIDC Manual. Some patterns will be present in gradation a ("present"), some in gradation b ("prominent"), c ("mildly dysfunctional"), d or e ("disturbed"). During the interpretation phase as well, it is highly recommended to have a second check of the data by another independent researcher.<sup>145</sup>

Table 16

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2004). Especially attributes F and H are very private, which makes them impossible to study from a distance (Immelman, 2004, p. 4). Only behaviors, habits, emotions, and self-reflections can be observed from a distance. Attributes A through E are regularly expressed by target persons and analyzed by journalists and researchers who have been observing them. Millon (1990, p. 160) stated that this "narrower scope of attributes [is] sufficient to provide a reasonably comprehensive picture" of the target person's personality profile.

<sup>145</sup> I thank behavioral therapists and healthcare psychologists from the practice for Child and Youth Psychology "Kiek" in Middelburg, the Netherlands for helping me with scoring, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered in order to study the communicated personalities of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands. The psychologists at Kiek have over 20 years of experience with the DSM-IV and experience in both the study and the practice of behavioral psychology in the Netherlands.

*Scoring and Interpretation, MIDC Manual II–Revisited*

MIDC conceptual basis for scoring and interpretation			
Level	Code	Category	Score
I	a	Present	1
II	b	Prominent	2
III	c	mildly dysfunctional	3
IV	d	moderately disturbed	4
V	e	markedly disturbed	5

*Note:* From Immelman, 2004, p. 13.

**Methodological Caveats.** Millon (1994a, 1996), Millon and Davis (2000), Oldham and Morris (1995), and Strack (1997) provided theoretically and empirically grounded narrative descriptions of personality patterns, which can be helpful for the interpretation of the data. Other researchers (e.g., Barber, 1992; Etheredge, 1978; Hermann, 1987; Renshon, 1996b; Simonton, 1988) have analyzed implications of personality patterns and the way they correlate with the patterns of Millon’s MIDC. Also, scholars have looked into the validity of the MIDC. Findings within the source materials are considered “logically linked to leadership suitability” according to De Vries and De Landtsheer (2009, pp. 6–11). Immelman (2004, p. 1) refers to Simonton, who states that this method, in which researchers extract personality traits from pieces of text about the leader written by others, is valid. Furthermore, “secondary sources can offer the basis for personality assessments as well” (Simonton, 1986, p. 150; see also 1988).

Last but not least, Etheridge (1978) and Simonton (1986, 1988) have offered a strong foundation for Immelman’s work by proving that extracting personality traits from biographic data can offer insight concerning the relationship between leadership personality and (the success

of/ quality of) political leadership. However, the problem with their approach is that the truth about anyone's personality is ambiguous. People likely display different personalities in different situations. Some people may rarely reveal their true personality in public or even during private psychological sessions. Some of them may not know how to typify their own personality, while others have several personalities.

This potential methodological shortcoming became much less problematic after adapting the MIDC to a method with which communicated instead of biographical personalities are revealed. Immelman (2004) labels his outcome as "the target person's MIDC personality." With this term, he refers to the "biographical" personality. He claims that, when the method is applied appropriately, researchers can make claims about the target person's "true" or "real" personality patterns, referring to the MIDC as a strong conceptual model.

However, the problem is not in the MIDC, it is in the ambitious interpretation of the results of meta-analysis. Immelman (2004) has done everything a researcher could possibly do to make data collection for the MIDC reliable and valid. He has set detailed rules on how many and what kind of source materials should be selected, and how many different sources need to refer to a certain criterion in order for the researcher to be allowed to note it on the score sheet. However, the data collection remains the weakest link, simply because bridging the gap between the researcher and the target person's mind may theoretically be impossible, even though, practically, Immelman's interpretation of a target person's personality patterns may have been as close to the truth as possible in the past.

In this dissertation, the term "personality" is replaced with the term "communicated personality." These personalities may differ from the actual, true, or biographical personalities of the cabinet ministers. Communicated personalities are drawings of personal, professional, and



political characteristics of a target person (cabinet minister) as expressed in common media sources during a certain period of time (here: during their terms as cabinet ministers). This way, Immelman's MIDC can be used as a media content analysis instrument by researchers who aim to reveal how media sources have covered public persons during a certain time in history.

**Final Remarks about the Method.** The long tradition of DSM–III and –IV research in psychology, the MIDC, and Immelman's (2004) method for the assessment at a distance of target persons such as presidents, prime ministers, and governors, whose personality patterns cannot be studied up close, provide an excellent basis for the analysis of communicated personalities of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands in order to understand more about their public credibility. Why Ronald Plasterk and Ernst Hirsch Ballin have attained so much perceived reliability, honesty, and competence, and what Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer have done to end up at the tail end of the credibility ranking of Part II, will become a little clearer in Parts V and VI, thanks to the MIDC framework and Immelman's manual (2004). After all, the way these cabinet ministers have presented themselves, and were presented by newspaper journalists, television makers, and public opinionists, will provide information about their communicated personalities. Some of the communicated personality patterns may turn out to be linked to HPC, while other communicated personality patterns may be linked to LPC. A hypothesis to start with, is that positive, strong communicated personality patterns are mostly seen in HPC cabinet ministers, while weaker, more pessimistic communicated personality patterns are mostly seen in LPC cabinet ministers. This dissertation does not aim to reveal any causal relationships between any of the variables and public credibility. Instead, it aims to come closer to an understanding of public credibility by investigating which features are seen in HPC cabinet ministers and which are seen in LPC cabinet ministers.

## Chapter 10: Ministerial Style and Skill Assessment: Methods

The second variable that may offer insight into the way cabinet ministers gain and lose credibility is a style and skill assessment. Style and skills are here defined as the unique way in which the cabinet minister deals with tasks, problems, challenges, and people on a day-to-day basis. HPC cabinet ministers may have fundamentally different style and skill profiles than do LPC cabinet ministers. Perhaps the differences will be more subtle. In any case, gathering information on the styles the selected cabinet ministers have applied to their day-to-day activities, through in-depth interviews and a style test, will most likely provide a few clues for a better understanding of their public credibility in the Netherlands.<sup>146</sup> In the following paragraphs, some methodological details about the style test will be discussed.

**Design and Operationalization.** Several versions of a style test similar to the one designed here have been used before. The style test used here is based on earlier versions, with which governance styles (also referred to as political styles or leadership styles) of Dutch aldermen and mayors were analyzed by Schouw and Tops (1998; see also Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Schouw and Tops (1998) developed a questionnaire to measure the “governance styles” of aldermen and mayors of Dutch municipalities. The reason for their research project was a request they received to create a map of Dutch leadership styles and help the local politicians acknowledge and improve their political images.<sup>147</sup> Schouw and Tops (1998) formulated five major governance styles that were observed in government officials at the local government level

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<sup>146</sup> I have considered using the very same methodological framework for analyzing the operational style of cabinet ministers as the one I used for analyzing communicated personalities. Instead, I concluded that a new instrument was needed because the MIDC is too complicated and the content is too personal for use in in-depth interviews with the people from the inner circle of the cabinet ministers. Instead, a less complicated instrument was used that is more suitable for use in a professional and political environment.

<sup>147</sup> Unlike the style test designed for this book, theirs was not designed in order to create a better understanding of the concept of public credibility.

in the Netherlands. Each one of their styles has its own exclusive characteristics. Their style test, which is a list of 20 pairs of statements, was filled out by members of Dutch municipality councils (municipality-level parliamentarians). They were asked to pick a statement out of every pair that would fit the character of the alderman or mayor. That effort resulted in an interesting book about aldermen, their leadership styles, and the way those styles affect their operational performance as municipality leaders (see Schouw & Tops, 1998).

The conceptual framework and style test used here were designed and validated with the help of a group of 20 political and governmental “insiders” (spokesmen, personal assistants, policy advisors, top managers, government advisors, and members of the national parliament<sup>148</sup>). During a meeting in April 2008 that lasted 1.5 hours, the group was asked to come up with four or five ideal types that represent the styles of all present-day Dutch cabinet ministers. The style test of Schouw and Tops (1998) served as a starting point and example. They agreed on four main styles or ideal types: the political style, the connective style, the public style, and the rational style. Every ideal type has its own distinctive features that can be divided into three categories: strengths, image threats, and field focus. Table 17 shows these key features of every style.

The styles are ideal types, which implies that none of the styles can be found in its purest form in reality, and the features may be formulated to a somewhat extreme degree. Most cabinet ministers may display some features of several styles and most likely none of them display all the features of one style. The unique combination of the various styles of a particular cabinet minister is called his or her “style and skill profile.”

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<sup>148</sup> See Appendix 3 for a list of names and positions.

Table 17

*Styles, Strengths, Image Threats and Focus of the Four Styles*

Styles	Strength	Image threats	Field focus
Political style	Decisiveness, vision, determination, goal-orientation	The end justifies the means	Politics
Connective style	Acceptance, being well-considered, deliberative, a good listener	Sub-optimal compromises and delay	Stakeholders
Public style	Inspires broad acceptance, external view, is outgoing, manages well by speech	Populist, hot on publicity	The public
Rational style	Rationality, evidence based policies	Technocratic, not empathetic	Policies

Each of the styles of Table 17 refers to one of the four skill sets every cabinet minister needs, according to the insiders that helped build the framework and the style test. Most cabinet ministers master several, but not all of the skill sets equally. For example, a cabinet minister who used to be a university professor and entered the political stage to become a cabinet minister in the field in which he or she had expertise (without any Parliament experience or experience as a local politician or governor) may have detailed knowledge about the policy field and will therefore have a well-developed, rational style, possibly with a less developed political style resulting from a lack of political experience. Aside from experience, the style profile of a cabinet minister may depend on personal preferences and interests (he or she may like the political

process more than the policy-making process), skills (he or she may be good at connecting groups and creating consensus, and therefore have a more connective style) or natural charm and charisma (both of which will help in succeeding on television and therefore developing a public style). The framework also implies that risks occur when any of the styles (and corresponding skill sets) are severely underdeveloped, since the group of insiders made it clear that the framework is based on a distinction between the four basic skill sets every cabinet minister needs to succeed. Without political, connective, public, or rational skills, one or more of the aspects of a cabinet minister's job will become neglected, and as a result, the cabinet minister may fail to a certain extent.

Once the framework was created, half of the group of insiders, in combination with seven new insiders who had not been involved in making the framework, were asked to help define 16 statements (four for each style) in order to make a style and skill assessment with which the styles of cabinet ministers could be measured. The 20 pairs of statements of Schouw and Tops (1998) were used as a starting point. Through interviews with five other insiders who had not been involved in the design of the framework, nor the style test, the questionnaire with 16 statements was validated.

The final product was a style and skill assessment questionnaire (simply "style test") with 16 statements to be filled out by the inner-circle experts. These are the individuals who work with the cabinet ministers directly and daily. The inner-circle participants, who were interviewed about the cabinet ministers in 2008, 2009, and 2010, and who were asked to fill out the style test with their cabinet ministers in mind, were policy advisors (directors, directors general, and a secretary general at the ministries), personal assistants (affiliated with the political party of the

cabinet minister) and communication advisors (working for the ministry at any of the communications departments).

The policy advisors may be considered politically neutral, although there is no guarantee that their opinions are indeed completely neutral. They may have opinions on politics and on the political decisions of the cabinet minister. They may or may not like the cabinet minister as a person. However, they belong to the most neutral category of all people who can answer the questions of the style test with authority, because they know the cabinet ministers very well professionally, and in some cases beyond that. Because of their expertise and loyalty to neutrality, at least one policy advisor has been interviewed for every selected cabinet minister. Additionally, some communications advisors and political advisors have been interviewed in order to consider counter-indications and validate the outcome of the style test as filled out by the policy advisors. Although the style test data are based on opinions, the quality and expertise of the style test respondents helps to increase the quality of the style test results. In the case of two very different style test data sets for one cabinet minister, both data sets will be discussed in order to learn what the inner-circle experts thought of the cabinet minister and on which aspects they disagreed. In other cases, the style test respondents will independently agree with one another on how to typify the cabinet minister's style and skill profile. In that case, only one style and skill profile will be discussed, and minor differences between the judgments of respondents will be left out of the discussion.

Compared to the Schouw and Tops (1998) instrument, a few adjustments were made:

- Instead of a conceptual framework with five styles, the new style test is based on four basic styles;
- Instead of choosing from pairs of statements, respondents are asked to rate every

- statement on a scale from 1 to 4 for more precision;
- Instead of 20 statements (five styles, four statements for each style), the new style test has only 16 statements (four styles, four statements for each style);
- Instead of parliamentarians (or in the case of Schouw and Tops, 1998, municipality council members), the respondents are people from the inner circle who work or have worked for the cabinet ministers and know them well. This should minimize the influence of political preferences on the outcome of the style test.

**Data Collection.** Data were gathered between July 2008 and December 2011. Interviews took place face-to-face or by telephone. During these interviews, the statements were read out loud and answered by the respondent: one meant “yes, certainly,” two meant “yes,” three meant “no,” and four meant “no, certainly not.”

The style test questionnaire can be found in Appendix 12. Appendix 15 shows to which style each statement belongs. The statements were formulated somewhat extremely on purpose: They need to allow for distinguishing the cabinet ministers from one another based on the answers given by the respondents. A 4-point scale is used to force respondents to choose either “yes” or “no.” A 5-point scale would have given respondents an easy escape toward the middle. The questionnaire has a neutral escape option in case the respondent is not certain what the answer should be. This improves validity and precision of the instrument: Respondents should not be forced to give their opinion if they find that none of the answering categories covers the truth or if they lack the information or knowledge to answer the question correctly and with certainty. A total score for every style will be calculated at the end. When a respondent says “yes, this statement certainly applies,” the number 1 is circled on the style test questionnaire (see Appendix 12).

**Data Analysis.** The data of the score sheet (Appendix 13) will be displayed in a radar chart (Appendix 14). This shows the differences between cabinet ministers and their style and skill profiles at a glance. Before drawing conclusions about the relationship between a style and skill profile and a cabinet minister's public credibility, the styles and skills of each selected cabinet minister need to be interpreted properly. This can be done by looking back at the features of each style in the conceptual framework (see Table 17).

**Methodological Caveats.** The first methodological threat concerns the unavailability of some first-choice respondents. The style test is only as good as the respondents who fill it out. Therefore, the selection of respondents is crucial. When contacting potential respondents (inner-circle experts), the aim was to find those who are the highest in rank, because they are often the closest to the cabinet ministers. However, some advisors of choice were unavailable for interviews because they believed that contributing to this research project was not compatible with their professional oath. Two out of 12 key experts from the inner circle were unavailable. Consequently, the style and skill profile of each selected cabinet minister has been studied, with the exception of Jacqueline Cramer's. Consequently, the other LPC and MPC cases (Eimert van Middelkoop and Guusje ter Horst) provide the clues for a better understanding of the style and skills of cabinet ministers, and whether and how they may be linked to public credibility. All respondents demanded, and were granted, anonymity.

A style and skill profile was previously defined as "the unique way in which the person behind the cabinet minister deals with tasks, problems, challenges, and people on a day-to-day basis." This was operationalized by gathering the knowledge of a group of 20 insiders on the four most common ways in which cabinet ministers do this. Their answers became the new framework in which the style of each of the six selected cabinet ministers was classified. This is



where the second methodological caveat possibly occurs: By using this narrow scope through which the style of cabinet ministers will be analyzed, any characteristic that is not within the scope of the researcher's vision will be ignored. Some of these characteristics may be very interesting, and, if they were noticed, may have created a better understanding of the cabinet minister's credibility. However, the fact that people from the inner circle came up with only four styles while they had the freedom to create five or six is a sign that four styles will enable researchers to catch the most important features of each cabinet minister's way of operating. Narrowing down the scope of research is necessary in order to provide data that can be gathered and analyzed. The four styles provide enough variety between cases to compare them to one another and to compare style and skill profiles to public credibility profiles for every case (every cabinet minister).

Furthermore, the way the questionnaire was developed helps to increase validity: A different group of insiders (with some overlap) was asked to keep the conceptual framework in mind and help the researcher to come up with four statements for every style. These statements needed to indicate every aspect of each style and they needed to be exclusive and slightly overlapping. Before the insiders meeting, the researcher formulated a long list of statements (including the statements used by Schouw and Tops in 1998). The people from the inner circle were asked to choose 16 statements from this list. Once 16 statements were selected, each one of the statements was discussed to make the formulation exactly right. This process enabled the researcher to develop the style test with the most care, precision and knowledge of a cabinet minister's daily tasks. As a result, the style test measures "the unique way in which the person behind the cabinet minister deals with tasks, problems, challenges, and people on a day-to-day basis."

Also, almost every style test interview will be biased, because the respondent either likes the cabinet minister as a person, dislikes the cabinet minister as a person or has a neutral opinion. When the interviewer notices that there is a friendly and pleasant relationship between the respondent and his or her cabinet minister, then the analysis of the style test results needs to be carried out with extra caution. Why does the respondent like the cabinet minister? Is there a personal or a professional basis for the friendship? The style test is successful if the style and skill profile of the cabinet minister is being measured, not the friendship between respondent and target person (cabinet minister). However, a friendship between a cabinet minister and a policy advisor could have grown out of a shared style. The “friendship” could be a sign that a cabinet minister is socially skillful and knows precisely how to guide the people at the ministry to a successful outcome.

In some cases, there will be a personal mismatch between the cabinet minister and the policy advisor (respondent/interviewee). In this case, the interviewer needs to find out (again) whether the respondent thinks negatively of the cabinet minister for personal or professional reasons. In this case, too, the style test is successful if the style and skill profile of the cabinet minister is being measured. The interviewer needs to find out whether the respondent dislikes the cabinet minister for personal or professional reasons. Professional reasons occur when the respondent dislikes the style and skill profile of the cabinet minister because of the way the cabinet minister runs the ministry or makes political decisions. The respondent may dislike the way the cabinet minister treats advisors, deals with stakeholders, or represents the ministry in the political arena or in the cabinet. During the interview, it should become clear whether the respondent likes or dislikes the style and skill profile of the cabinet minister, or the cabinet

minister as a person. If there is a dislike of the person, the interviewer may have to find another, more neutral respondent who is not as biased, for a second opinion.

**The Style and Skill Assessment: Ready for Measurements.** To understand more of the concept of public credibility in cabinet ministers, the style test was created as an instrument with which the style and skill profile of each of the selected cabinet ministers can be measured.

Although there are methodological caveats to every method and every research instrument, the style test has been validated and re-validated, which has secured its validity: The style and skill profile of cabinet ministers can now be measured. Whether and how the style and skill profile of cabinet ministers may be linked to a cabinet minister's way of operating on a daily basis, and therefore how it may affect the way the cabinet minister is perceived by others (including citizens), will be investigated in Parts V and VI.

## Chapter 11: Policy Goal Realization: Methods

The third and final variable that may offer insight into the way cabinet ministers gain and lose credibility is the extent to which they have realized their policy goals during their 3-year terms. Goal realization by Dutch cabinet ministers between 2007 and 2010 is defined as “the extent to which the 2008 and 2009 sub-goals, formulated by the cabinet at the start in February 2007 and (co-)executed by the cabinet ministers, are realized according to the cabinet, Parliament, and the Court of Audit and inner-circle experts on Accountability Day in May 2009 and May 2010.” The cabinet resigned in February 2010 and was a demissionary cabinet during Accountability Day in May of 2010. With the upcoming elections in the summer of 2010, the debates on Accountability Day that year seemed more politically charged than the debates on Accountability Days in the past. However, the data can still be used to measure which cabinet ministers reached their policy goals and which did not, and also how the Parliament responded to their shortcomings.

**Design, Operationalization, and Data Collection.** The method through which data on policy goal realization of cabinet ministers were gathered was designed for the purposes of this dissertation. Gathering information on the progress of the six selected cabinet ministers made in 2008 and 2009 was possible because the cabinet accounts for its progress every year on the third Wednesday of May (on Accountability Day, which in Dutch is called *verantwoordingsdag*). Cabinet ministers publicly account for their expenses and policy accomplishments in a written report (the Accountability Report, TK 31951), followed by speeches and a debate with the members of Parliament. In the report, each ministry gives a seemingly thorough update about policy results thus far. The Accountability Report contains:

- a description of goals for every year, for every cabinet minister, between 2007 and 2011;
- indicators to determine whether goals have been realized;
- information on the extent to which information on goals is missing;
- the character of the goal (*sleuteldoelen*, or “key goals,” are complex, more difficult and more important goals); and
- the extent to which (sub) goals have been accomplished.

The cabinet writes its own Accountability Report, which may decrease the reliability of the information. In order to gather data from more neutral, and therefore more trustworthy sources, several other institutions need to be consulted, the first of which is the Parliament.

Parliamentarians carry out their own independent research on the operational performance of cabinet ministers, and they comment on the report on Accountability Day. The Parliament’s comments will be included to help determine whether our selected cabinet ministers have successfully reached their policy goals in 2008 and 2009.

Additionally, an important “watchdog” of executive performance that was designed to make power accountable is the Court of Audit (in Dutch: *Rekenkamer*). Besides the Accountability Report written by the cabinet ministers (TK 31951), there is a written reaction of the Court of Audit, about the legality and effectiveness of state expenses and state policies in 2008 (TK 31924). Comments from the inner-circle interviews will be discussed, where relevant, in order to investigate which cabinet ministers have been able to realize their policy goals as an important indicator of ministerial performance.

**Data Analysis.** Since the nature of the goals and the number of goals per cabinet minister vary a great deal, caution is required in this phase of data analysis. Some cabinet ministers have 20 policy goals they execute without the help of a state secretary, while other cabinet ministers are politically responsible for a long list of goals that are primarily executed by one or two state secretaries who are very independent. Then there are cabinet ministers who have only one policy goal.

There are two types of data in this method that require the analysis of texts. The first is the Accountability Report written by the cabinet. The second source of data is the written report of the Parliament's discussion with the cabinet ministers on Accountability Day. The report will be studied and interpreted by means of qualitative content analysis. When one or two parliamentary parties make several critical remarks during the discussion about one or more policy goals, this can be a sign of Parliament's dismay and a lack of goal realization by the cabinet minister. Positive remarks can soften the judgment, while negative remarks can sharpen it. The more serious the Parliament's concerns, the more Parliament members agree with one another, and the more those opinions are shared by several political parties, the more reason there is for the researcher to conclude that the cabinet minister has failed to realize his or her policy goals. Compliments from the Parliament have the opposite effect.

**Methodological Caveats.** A potential shortcoming concerns the trustworthiness of data. The cabinet has the freedom to "polish" the Accountability Report as much as it desires. The Parliament could do its own research, but according to a self-analysis of the parliament, it lacks the human resources and budget to carry out the research it needs in order to control the

cabinet.<sup>149</sup> Goal realization of cabinet ministers may be the most complicated variable in this dissertation. The cabinet claims to promote evidence-based policies, establish goals and sub-goals, and account for its work and expenses, but as an outsider it may be impossible to research this topic in-depth. However, methodological caveats such as this can be overcome by adjusting the research ambitions and interpretation.

Based on the available research material, it is possible to draw a general overview of goal realization by cabinet ministers in the Netherlands between 2008 and 2010. It is also possible to determine which of the cabinet ministers faced the most criticism during parliamentary debates and which received most of the compliments. Last, it is possible to determine whether higher public credibility may be linked to (not “caused by”) flawless goal realization, where lower and medium credibility may be linked to flawed goal realization. This will help in creating a better understanding of the links, if any, between policy performance and public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands.

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<sup>149</sup> Parliamentary Self Reflection 2007–2009, TK 31 845. In Dutch: Parlementaire zelfreflectie, Vertrouwen en Zelfvertrouwen, 2007–2009.

### **Conclusions for Part IV: Ready for Further Research**

As discussed in the previous chapters, in spite of some shortcomings, each method may help in the creation of valid data with which media appearance, ministerial style and skills, or policy goal realization can be analyzed. Differences between the methodological instruments in terms of their length of description, history, or how complicated they are do not make one instrument more important than the other. Each method may provide a potentially important piece of the puzzle in order to create a better understanding of public credibility. Therefore, all methods, and the data gathered by means of these methods, have equal status in this dissertation. The methods discussed in Part IV will be applied in Parts V and VI in order to understand the lower, medium, and higher credibility of five cabinet ministers in the Balkenende IV cabinet who were in office between 2007 and 2010.

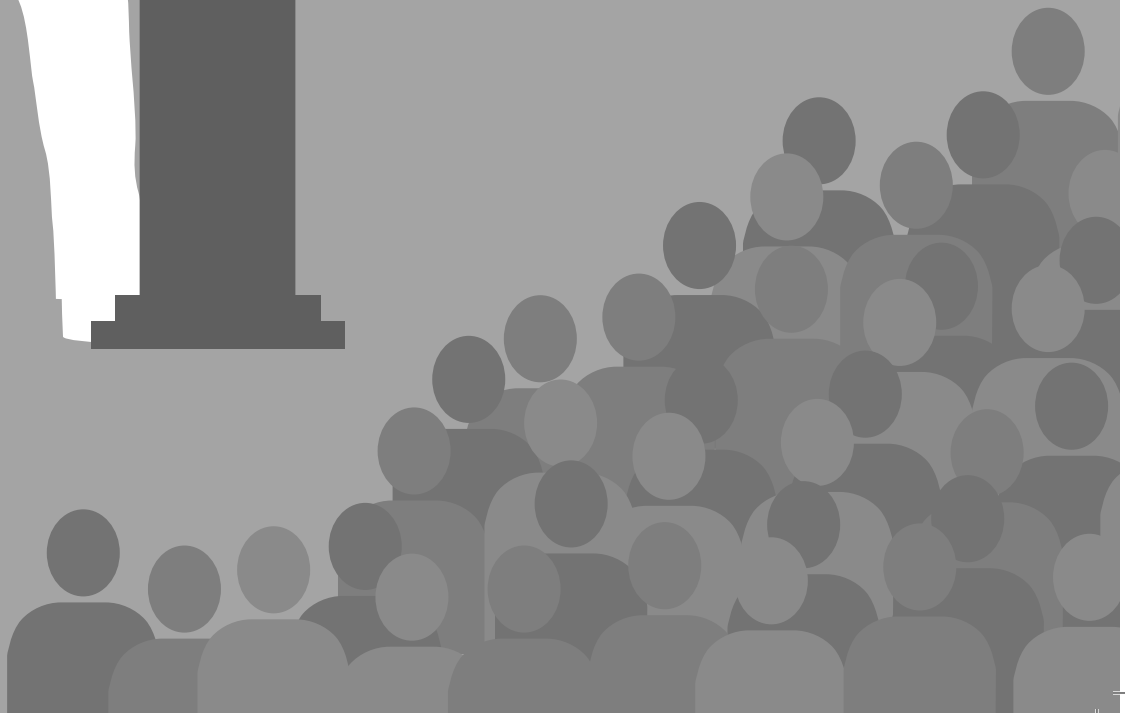




# PART 5

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## Understanding Higher Public Credibility Case by Case



## **PART V: UNDERSTANDING HIGHER PUBLIC CREDIBILITY CASE BY CASE**

Part V discusses several aspects of the work of the two previously selected HPC cabinet ministers, Ernst Hirsch Ballin (Chapter 12) and Ronald Plasterk (Chapter 13), in order to determine whether their communicated personalities, ministerial style and skills, and/or policy goal realization can be linked to their ability to attain higher public credibility (HPC).

Their communicated personality profiles reveal how each of them were presented in the media between 2008 and 2010. Their style and skill profile shows how people within the inner circle of the ministry have typified their style and skills and whether certain skills were more developed than others (there are four styles, and four corresponding skills sets, in total). The last part of each chapter completes the assessment of each cabinet minister with a study of the extent to which each of the cabinet ministers has managed to realize policy goals in time and to the satisfaction of Parliament. The methods and instruments have been discussed in Part IV.

## Chapter 12: Ernst Hirsch Ballin

Between 2008 and 2010, Ernst Hirsch Ballin was able to attain a greater degree of public credibility than most other cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. This became clear in Part II, where it was revealed that the LISS panel respondents considered him to be exceptionally competent (70%), reliable (68.4%), and honest (62.8%). In the following paragraphs, Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile, style and skill profile, and policy goal realization will be discussed in order to determine which angle best explains why the LISS panel respondents gave him so much more credit than they gave to other cabinet ministers.

The first paragraph shows that Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile contains a significant expression of the conscientious pattern, which may have helped his public credibility. The second paragraph shows that Hirsch Ballin combined almost equal amounts of several different styles and skills, which may have played a role in his attainment of public credibility. The third and last paragraph of this chapter shows that Hirsch Ballin realized all of his policy goals and that Parliament was content with his work. The conclusions of this chapter will address the question of how to understand his higher public credibility based on the data discussed in paragraphs one through three.

**Communicated Personality Profile—Ernst Hirsch Ballin.** In this paragraph, the MIDC will be applied to media articles about Hirsch Ballin in order to determine his communicated personality patterns. The sources used to gather information about Hirsch Ballin are mostly press articles with a biographical element, some of which contain quotes by people who were interviewed by the journalist writing the article. Different sources revealed various perspectives on Hirsch Ballin. The cabinet minister was portrayed as a colleague, a boss, a politician, a cabinet minister, a family member, and a friend.

To diagnose Ernst Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality patterns, 130 articles published between February 2008 and March 2010 were analyzed and labeled according to the MIDC method (Immelman, 2004).<sup>150</sup> These articles (from newspapers and magazines) were published during the 3 years after the start of the cabinet and before the last credibility measurement took place, which was just after the cabinet resigned in February 2010.<sup>151</sup> All quotes from the articles were translated into English and can be found in Appendix 17.

The score sheet in Table 18 has been used to diagnose Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality by means of the adapted MIDC, as discussed in Part IV.

Table 18

*Cabinet Minister of Justice Ernst Hirsch Ballin's Communicated Personality Patterns: Original Score Sheet*<sup>152</sup>

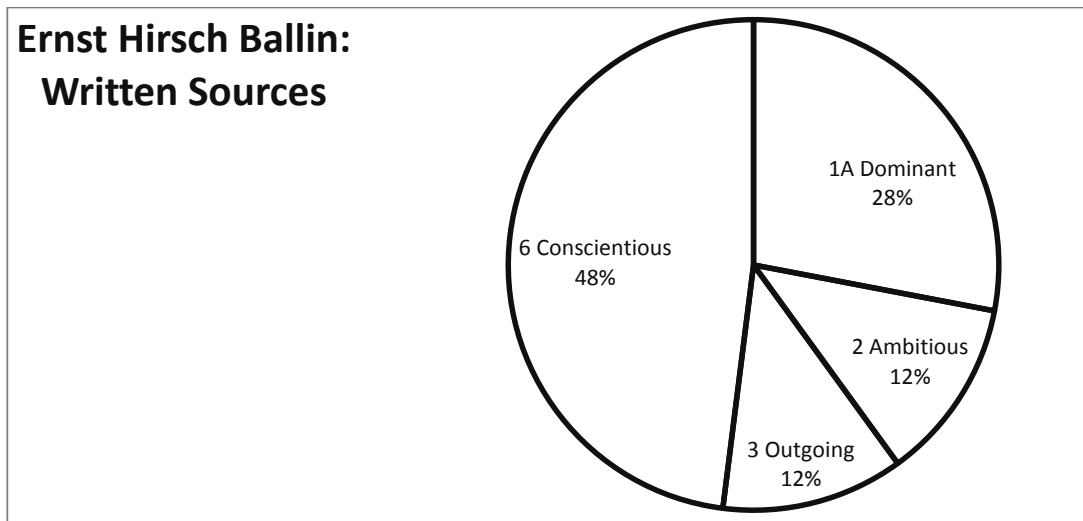
MIDC	1A			2			3			6		
Gradation	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	A	b	c
Points	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Attribute A	1	2		1			1			1		
Attribute B	1			1						1	2	

<sup>150</sup> For an extended discussion of the methods used in this paragraph, see Part IV.

<sup>151</sup> The four credibility measurements took place in January and July 2009 and January and March 2010. The LISS panel was asked to rate the cabinet ministers on a 4-point scale. The three credibility variables (characteristics of a high-credibility cabinet minister according to the LISS panel respondents) are: perceived reliability, perceived honesty, and perceived competence. Ernst Hirsch Ballin was one of the HPC cabinet ministers.

<sup>152</sup> How to read Table 18: a full score sheet exclusive of scale 9 and 10 contains 45 diagnostic criteria (10 scales in the top horizontal row multiplied by five attribute domains in the first column, multiplied by three gradations). The score sheet of Ernst Hirsch Ballin shows only the cells belonging to patterns in which his communicated personality was represented. Each of the criteria represents a feature (characteristic) of the target person's communicated personality. For example, the first, top left criterion stands for "commanding" and will be referred to as A1Aa (attribute A refers to expressive behavior, scale 1A refers to the dominant pattern, while gradation a is the mildest gradation and gets one point). Each of the other criteria of Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality will be discussed in this paragraph.

Attribute C										1		
Attribute D							1			1		
Attribute E	1	2		1			1			1	2	3
Total RAW												
25	7			3			3			12		
Total perc.	28%			12%			12%			48%		
100												



*Figure 17.* MIDC pie chart for Ernst Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile between January 2008 and March 2010, based on data from Table 18.

#### **Results of MIDC Analysis: Ernst Hirsch Ballin's Communicated Personality**

**Patterns.** At the beginning of his term, Hirsch Ballin was already known as the Cabinet Minister of Justice. He had replaced Piet Hein Donner during the last part of the previous cabinet term (Balkenende III), and he had worked as a cabinet minister for the CDA from 1989 to 1994. Hirsch Ballin had not been as popular in those days as he would later become during the

Balkenende III and IV cabinets. Throughout his term, newspaper journalists wrote about him as a dutiful person who did what needed to be done with confidence and self-assurance. He was also considered authoritative on many political topics, and now and then commanding and forceful in his attempts to change laws and regulations. Hirsch Ballin often expressed a great respect for other people, especially when it came to those holding different beliefs and religions. Stories in the newspaper about his background portrayed a young Hirsch Ballin who was at times restrained as a child and later a very serious and studious adolescent. Between 2008 and 2010, Hirsch Ballin presented himself and his politics as assertive, competitive, confident, charming, reliable, conscientious, and righteous (Attribute domain E, self-image, see Immelman, 2004).

The ways in which Hirsch Ballin communicated his personality, and the ways in which others presented him in the media, shows one strong pattern (scale 6, the conscientious-respectful-dutiful pattern), one medium pattern (scale 1A, the dominant-asserting-controlling pattern), and two minor patterns (scale 2, the ambitious-confident-self-serving pattern and scale 3, the outgoing-congenial-gregarious pattern)

The results of MIDC analysis of Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality patterns show that:

- the cabinet minister strongly communicates the conscientious pattern (scale 6: conscientious, 48%);
- the cabinet minister shows dominant behavior (scale 1A: dominant, 28%); and
- none of his patterns are exaggerated; they are all within the normal range.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> None of the patterns are strongly present within the target person's communicated personality profile. They would be strongly present if the raw MIDC points were between 15 and 24. This would "suggest maladaptively exaggerated features" (Immelman, 2004, p. 16).

**The Strength of Evidence and Range of Personality Types.** Table 19 shows an overview of Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality profile. Scale 6 (the conscientious pattern) is most present within Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality profile. This pattern has the highest score, and the source materials provide quotes that refer to criteria from each of the attribute domains (A–E).<sup>154</sup> The other patterns present within Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality profile do not meet this criterion, as points in attribute domains B, C, and/or D are missing.

On scale 6, the conscientious pattern, Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality has 12 points. In Immelman’s original method, there would be “robust evidence for a Level II personality type; the basic personality pattern [would be] prominent” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). In this study regarding communicated personalities, the diagnosis is slightly different: There is evidence for a Level II *communicated* personality type; the basic *communicated* personality pattern may be prominent. However, the justification of “identification of a criterion at the second level (scored 2 points) in all five attribute domains of a given personality pattern” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15) has not been met (see score sheet in Table 18: gradation b). This means that the data do not “provide convincing evidence for the existence of the personality type associated with those criteria” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). Not the justification for a level II personality type, but the justification for a level I personality type has been met. This may mean that Hirsch Ballin’s communicated conscientious personality pattern is just “present and well within the normal range,” not “prominent” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). Although the MIDC has

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<sup>154</sup> As explained before, Immelman’s attribute domain A represents expressive behavior, B represents interpersonal conduct, C represents cognitive style, D represents mood/temperament, and E represents self-image (Immelman, 2004).



been adapted for this dissertation, and as a result, the biographic personality patterns are not being researched, the justification may be less important, although it nevertheless means something: Hirsch Ballin has communicated mainly conscientious patterns, but not to a point where outsiders may have considered his patterns prominent, let alone maladaptive.

On scale 1A, the dominant pattern, Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality has 7 points. In Immelman's original method there would be "robust evidence for a Level I personality type; the basic personality pattern is present and well within the normal range" (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). However, the justification of "identification of a criterion at the first level (scored 1 point) in all five attribute domains of a given personality pattern" (Immelman, 2004, p. 15) has not been met. According to Immelman, the source materials do not "provide convincing evidence for the existence of the personality type associated with those criteria" (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). In other words, only scale 6, the conscientious pattern, can be considered a valid part of Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality in the original MIDC method. The evidence found in the source materials for a dominant communicated personality profile will nevertheless be discussed, because it contains valuable information for a better understanding of Ernst Hirsch Ballin's public credibility. After all, there were quite a lot of references in the newspaper articles about Hirsch Ballin displaying dominant behavior, so the analysis is required and will take place in the following pages.

Table 19

*Overview of Hirsch Ballin's Personality Profile*

Scale	Attributes	Points	Evidence	Level	Diagnosis
Conscientious	A, B, C, D, E	12	Convincing	I	Present
Dominant	A, B, E	7	Not sufficient	x	x

**Discussion of Hirsch Ballin's Communicated Personality Profile.**<sup>155</sup> During the cabinet term, many Dutch newspapers referred to Hirsch Ballin as a cabinet minister with a conscientious-respectful-dutiful (scale 6) and dominant-asserting-controlling (scale 1A) communicated personality. Furthermore, many quotes refer to a few criteria within the ambitious (scale 2) and outgoing (scale 3) communicated personality patterns, although since only a few MIDC criteria were recognized in the source materials, these patterns do not have enough raw MIDC points to be counted as full communicated personality patterns. Therefore, only scale 6 and scale 1A (the conscientious and the dominant pattern) will be discussed below. The following quote illustrates Hirsch Ballin's conscientious communicated personality pattern: "He is (...) the moral consciousness of the fourth cabinet Balkenende"<sup>156</sup> (A6a, dutiful; B6a, respectful).

Immelman (2004) explains that patterns can be present within the target person's personality in three different intensities. When it comes to the conscientious pattern, "at the well-adjusted pole are earnest, polite, *respectful* personalities" (Immelman, 2004, p. 40). Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality comes across in the source materials as well adjusted, and the description of the more extreme versions of this personality pattern do not fit his appearance: "Exaggerated Conscientious features [that] occur in *dutiful*, dependable, and principled but rigid personalities" (Immelman, 2004, p. 40). Also, there is no evidence for Hirsch Ballin's conscientious personality pattern being "most deeply ingrained [and] inflexible" because he has

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<sup>155</sup> For an extended overview of the evidence from the source materials, see Appendix 17. Only a few of the quotes from the source materials will be included below, so as to keep the text as compact as possible.

<sup>156</sup> Vrij Nederland, May 10, 2008. Title in Dutch: "Je moet eerst de ander zien te begrijpen." Original text in Dutch: "Hirsch Ballin, die wel het geweten van het vierde kabinet-Balkenende wordt genoemd."

not displayed any “moralistic, self-righteous, uncompromising, cognitively constricted, *compulsive* behavior patterns” (see Immelman, 2004, p. 40).

Readers of newspaper articles have likely developed a picture of Hirsch Ballin similar to the description of Oldham and Morris (1995), as someone with “strong moral principle[s]”, someone who will not “rest until the job is done and done right” (p. 62). This was supported by the source materials:

The stern, sometimes hard to follow language [Hirsch Ballin] is known for, has not changed. (...) Hirsch Ballin demands correct language from his employees as well. He is annoyed by mistakes. When he signs letters, he places corrections, remarks and question marks on the side of the document. Words such as ‘bike’ will be changed into ‘bicycle’. A circular he sent out to his subordinates, leaked. It contained remarks [about how to form a correct sentence and spell certain words the correct way].<sup>157</sup> (B6b, exacting; D6a, restrained; E6a, reliable; E6b, conscientious)

Millon (1996) adds that conscientious individuals “tend to follow standards from which they hesitate to deviate, attempt to act in an objective and rational manner, and decide matters in terms of what they believe is right” (p. 519). Immelman (2004) quotes Millon when he claims that “they are often religious, and maintaining their integrity ranks high among their goals while voicing moral values gives them a deep sense of satisfaction” (p. 44, without extra apostrophes). Some Dutch newspapers have, in fact, described Hirsch Ballin as a conscientious individual quite like Millon’s ideal type:

During his twenties he chose Catholicism over Judaism. Afshin Ellian considers the Jewish moral “a guide through life” and thought of Ernst Hirsch Ballin. He says Hirsch

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<sup>157</sup> De Volkskrant, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.”

Ballin is extremely intelligent, which inevitably means he must meet many people with relatively small intelligence, but Hirsch Ballin will never treat them disrespectfully. That is a moral principle, a mandate.<sup>158</sup> (A6a, respectful; E6b, conscientious)

People from his college were hanging around in hasj-coffeeshops and were making free love. Not Hirsch Ballin: he was struggling to choose between getting baptized or circumcised. He made a clear choice for Catholicism.<sup>159</sup> (A6a, dutiful; C6a, circumspect; D6a, restrained)

Furthermore, most conscientious individuals lead “a well-disciplined and organized lifestyle that enables [them] to function efficiently and successfully in most of their endeavors” (Millon, 1996, pp. 518–519; Immelman, 2004, p. 43). If Hirsch Ballin had communicated a more maladaptive version of the conscientious pattern, he would have come across as someone with a “driven, tense, and rigid adherence to external demands and to a perfectionism that typifies the disordered state” (Millon, 1996, pp. 518–519). Luckily, with 12 MIDC points as displayed in Table 18, Hirsch Ballin stays within the normal range of the communicated conscientious pattern, which may have helped him to “demonstrate an unusual degree of integrity, adhering as firmly as [he could] to society’s ethics and morals” (Millon, 1996, pp. 518–519). This, too, was supported by the evidence from the source materials, including the following quote: “People

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<sup>158</sup> Afshin Ellian, as cited in De Volkskrant, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.” Original text in Dutch: “De Leidse hoogleraar Afshin Ellian, die in 1996 bij Hirsch Ballin afstudeerde, verbaast dat niet. ‘De oorlog is zijn ijkpunt.’ Hij ziet ‘een Joodse moraal’ als leidraad in leven en denken van Ernst Hirsch Ballin. ‘Ernst is extreem intelligent. Dan kom je veel domme mensen tegen. Toch zal hij nooit neerbuigend doen. Dat is een moreel principe, een verplichting. De menselijke waardigheid mag niet worden aangetast, daar is hij heel radicaal in.’”

<sup>159</sup> Vrij Nederland, May 10, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Je moet eerst de ander zien te begrijpen.” Original text in Dutch: “Amsterdam, 1974. Het overgrote deel van de studentenpopulatie gaf zich over aan de korte zomer van de anarchie: ze bezetten hun faculteitsgebouw, verdeden hun dagen in de hasjcoffeeshops of bedreven de vrije liefde. Zo niet de toekomstige minister van Justitie. Hij worstelde met de vraag of hij zich moest laten dopen of besnijden of - net als zijn vader - agnost zou worden. Met een overtuigende keus voor het katholicisme als resultaat.”

often say he is practical, solution minded and has high integrity”<sup>160</sup> (A2a, confident; B2a, self-asserting; B6a, respectful). According to Hirsch Ballin, “whoever declares others second-level citizens will eventually cause harm to the democracy and the state of law”<sup>161</sup> (B6a = respectful, E6a, b, c = reliable, conscientious, righteous).

In attribute domain A (expressive behavior) Hirsch Ballin has communicated the first criterion of the conscientious personality pattern (A6a, dutiful). Consequently, he may have come across as someone with a strong “sense of duty,” someone who “does their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, follow regulations closely, and are typically responsible, reliable, proper, prudent, punctual, self-disciplined, well organized, and restrained” (Millon, 1996, pp. 513–515). “Of course the cabinet minister welcomes critical reflection, but never accuse him of restraining civil rights: ‘No, I consider this a protection of rights’”<sup>162</sup> (E6a, reliable; E6b, conscientious).

In terms of attribute domain B (interpersonal conduct), Hirsch Ballin has often come across as respectful (B6a) to others, especially minorities. Individuals like Hirsch Ballin may come across as “courteous, proper, and dignified” (Millon, 1996, pp. 514–515). Also, he seemed exacting (B6b) when dealing with subordinates, because, according to the source materials, he

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<sup>160</sup> De Volkskrant, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.” Original text in Dutch: “Praktisch, oplossingsgericht en integer, zijn nu de meest gehoorde eigenschappen.”

<sup>161</sup> Ernst Hirsch Ballin, as cited in Vrij Nederland, May 10, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Je moet eerst de ander zien te begrijpen.” Original text in Dutch: “Wie eenmaal anderen tot tweederangs burgers verklaart, brengt uiteindelijk ook de democratie en de rechtsstaat aan het wankelen.”

<sup>162</sup> Nederlands Dagblad, September 17, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Kindermishandeling ‘We zitten op hellend vlak als we criminelen niet tegenhouden’; Ernst Hirsch Ballin wil rechten en vrijheden van burgers juist beschermen.” Original text in Dutch: “EHB wil rechten en vrijheden van burgers juist beschermen. Natuurlijk heeft de bewindsman oog voor kritische kanttekeningen, maar kom bij hem niet aan met het verwijt dat Justitie keer op keer rechten en vrijheden van burgers inperkt. (...) Nee, ik zie dat juist als een bescherming van vrijheden.”

expects a lot from them. Hirsch Ballin could be “scrupulous in matters of morality and ethics and unbending in...relations with subordinates, insisting that they adhere to personally established rules and methods.” Just like Millon indicated (1996, pp. 514–515), this is illustrated through the following quote:

Some of his people think that the IRT-trauma [when EHB was forced to resign his Ministry in 1994, EW] is never far away: he reacted in an overly sensitive manner during one of his first debates, when his advisors appeared not to have informed him well enough. Those responsible had to leave immediately. He instantly felt that he was being taken advantage of.<sup>163</sup> (A1Aa, commanding; B6b, exacting; D6a, restrained)

Other criteria of the conscientious pattern supported by evidence from the source materials showed that Hirsch Ballin may have come across as circumspect (C6a) and restrained (D6a), which means that he has demonstrated that he is “cautious, prudent, deliberate, systematic, and attentive to detail” and “serious [and] reasonable” (Millon, 1996, p. 518). Furthermore, he has shown all three gradations of the conscientious pattern of the category of self-image: He often appeared reliable (E6a) and conscientious (E6b), and sometimes somewhat righteous (E6c):

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<sup>163</sup> *De Volkskrant*, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.” Original text in Dutch: “Zij duiden dat positief. Maar sommigen in zijn omgeving menen dat het IRT-trauma nooit ver weg is. Zo reageert hij wel erg heftig als in een van zijn eerste debatten blijkt dat zijn ambtenaren hem niet van de juiste informatie hebben voorzien. De verantwoordelijken moeten subiet het veld ruimen. ‘Hij verviel zo snel in: ik word belazerd,’ zegt een ambtenaar.”

Hirsch Ballin talks [about certain Dutch politicians on the right wing side, EW] with quite some fury: “I feel no single urge to help scapegoating minorities.” (E6a, b, c: reliable, conscientious, and righteous)

I felt uneasy when politicians began using the words “allochtone” and “autochthone.” Belonging to a certain group should never determine one’s place in society.<sup>164</sup> (E1Aa, assertive; B6a, respectful; E6a, b, c, reliable, conscientious, righteous)

Hirsch Ballin often follows a hard line. He wants to straighten out the difficult boys of Amsterdam West at a much younger age. Hirsch Ballin wants to have nothing to do with the politically correct way of thinking from the seventies. “Reality has to be acknowledged.” However, according to Hirsch Ballin, a tough policy should never lead to stigmatization.<sup>165</sup> (A1Aa, commanding; B6a, respectful; E6a, b, c, reliable, conscientious, righteous)

By asserting that one should treat people who believe in a different God or belong to a different group equally, Hirsch Ballin demonstrated his urge to protect minorities. By wanting to stop youngsters from bothering other citizens, he demonstrated reliability to those desiring peace

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<sup>164</sup> Ernst Hirsch Ballin, as cited in Vrij Nederland, May 10, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Je moet eerst de ander zien te begrijpen.” Original text in Dutch: “Je merkte dat mensen die tot dan toe als Nederlander met een andere afkomst waren beschouwd een etiket kregen opgeplakt: jij bent een allochtoon. We hadden moeten beseffen dat je het behoren tot een bepaalde groep niet als criterium mag hanteren voor de bepaling van iemands plaats in de samenleving.”

<sup>165</sup> Vrij Nederland, May 10, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Je moet eerst de ander zien te begrijpen.” Original text in Dutch: “De lastige jongetjes van Amsterdam-West wil Hirsch Ballin op veel eerdere leeftijd aanpakken dan nu. Zelfs kinderen van onder de twaalf moeten als ze daar aanleiding toe geven bij de kladden worden gegrepen. Van het politiek correcte denken uit de jaren zeventig en tachtig wil hij niets weten, zegt hij, de realiteit moet onder ogen worden gezien. Tot die realiteit hoort dat verhoudingsgewijs veel criminelen van Marokkaanse en Antilliaanse afkomst zijn. Alleen: zo'n constatering mag wat Hirsch Ballin betreft nooit tot stigmatisering leiden.”

and safety in society.<sup>166</sup> And by calling for moral values with regard to stigmatization and the scapegoating of minorities, he may have come across as righteous. Righteous individuals were typified by Millon (1996) as people who tend to “overvalue aspects of themselves that exhibit virtue, moral rectitude, discipline, perfection, prudence, and loyalty” (p. 516). Aside from this last criterion of the conscientious-respectful-dutiful pattern, all of the criteria supported by evidence in the source materials were in the first or second gradation. This means that no exaggerated features were present and that Hirsch Ballin’s most apparent communicated personality pattern is present, but not maladaptive (12 MIDC points). This may have minimized the criticism he received from journalists.

Additionally, the type of personality pattern that is most present within Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality profile is a good one to have, because it may be very difficult to criticize someone who is first and foremost conscientious and reliable. Hirsch Ballin may have done an excellent job attaining more public credibility by often stressing that he valued all of the criteria of the conscientious pattern (which is the reason he gathered all of the MIDC points in attribute E, self-image). Consciously or subconsciously, he frequently referred to himself as reliable, conscientious, and righteous (E6a, b and c), which may have helped him in making a conscientious impression, which may in turn have helped him to attain higher credibility than most other cabinet ministers in the Balkenende IV cabinet.

The second communicated personality pattern supported by evidence in the source materials pertaining to Hirsch Ballin is the dominant-asserting-controlling pattern. Hirsch Ballin’s

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<sup>166</sup> The criterion “reliable” was defined by Millon (1996) as “dependable, disciplined, responsible, industrious, efficient, and trustworthy” (p. 516). See also Immelman (2004, p. 46).



dominant communicated personality pattern is illustrated by the following short quote: “Fanatics will be punished”<sup>167</sup> (A1Aa, commanding; B1Aa, authoritative; E1Aa, assertive; E1Ab, competitive).

Immelman (2004) explains that patterns can be present within the target person’s personality in three different intensities. When it comes to the dominant pattern, “at the well-adjusted pole are strong-willed, commanding, assertive personalities” (Immelman, 2004, p. 18). Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality comes across in the source materials as well adjusted, and the description of the more extreme versions of this personality pattern do not fit his appearance: “slightly exaggerated dominant features occur in forceful, intimidating, controlling personalities” (Immelman, 2004, p. 18). Also, there is no evidence for Hirsch Ballin’s conscientious personality pattern being “most deeply ingrained [and] inflexible” because he did not display any “domineering, belligerent, aggressive behavior patterns” (see Immelman, 2004, p. 18). Readers of newspaper articles likely developed a picture of Hirsch Ballin as an “effective leader” who is “talented in supervising and persuading others to work for the achievement of common goals” (Millon, 1994a, p. 34). This was supported by the source materials: “The unrest at the Justice department at the time Donner and Verdonk [were cabinet ministers] has vanished like snow in front of the sun”<sup>168</sup> (A1Aa, commanding; B1Aa, authoritative; A2a, confident; B2a, self-asserting, D2a, poised).

Also, Hirsch Ballin may have come across as someone with “an assertive, dominant, and tough-minded personal style” and as someone who “tends to be strong-willed, ambitious,

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<sup>167</sup> *De Telegraaf*, July 12, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Fanatici pakken we aan.”

<sup>168</sup> *Nederlands Dagblad*, November 4, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Dachten justitieambtenaren al dat ze zich in hun handen mochten knijpen met Donner (ook rechtsgeleerde) als minister, Hirsch Ballin ligt zo mogelijk nóg beter. De onrust op het departement die er ten tijde van Donner en Verdonk was - vooral door de Schipholbrand - is als sneeuw voor de zon verdwenen.”

competitive, and self-determined” (Strack, 1997, p. 490), as demonstrated by his own statement that “[Geert] Wilders and [Rita] Verdonk produce fake solutions, I don’t need [these parliamentarians] in order to see what this country needs”<sup>169</sup> (E1Aa, assertive; E1Ab, competitive; E2a, confident; E6a, reliable).

In attribute domain A (expressive behavior) Hirsch Ballin has communicated the first and second criteria of the dominant personality pattern (A1Aa, commanding and A1Ab, forceful). Millon (1996) has explained that dominant individuals may be “tough, strong-willed, outspoken, competitive, and unsentimental” (2004, p. 19 paraphrasing Millon, 1996, pp. 483–487). He has defined forceful individuals as “controlling, contentious, and at times overbearing” (Immelman, 2004, p. 19 paraphrasing Millon, 1996, pp. 483–487). The source materials reveal that Ernst Hirsch Ballin is indeed “forceful,” in the way that he “gets things done” (Immelman, 2004, p. 19 paraphrasing Millon, 1996, pp. 483–487).

In attribute domain B (interpersonal conduct), Hirsch Ballin often showed himself to be authoritative (B1Aa), through his well-respected knowledge of the law, his ambitious policies, and his experience as the Cabinet Minister of Justice. Millon (1996) has described the interpersonal conduct of dominant individuals as “powerful, authoritative, directive, and persuasive” (Immelman, 2004, p. 20; see also Millon, 1996, p. 484; Millon & Everly, 1985,

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<sup>169</sup> Ernst Hirsch Ballin, as cited in *De Telegraaf*, July 12, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fanatici pakken we aan.” Original text in Dutch: “Wilders, maar ook Verdonk, komt met schijnoplossingen. De nieuwe politieke bewegingen suggereren dat er iets aan de hand is, dat er iets heel anders moet, zonder dat duidelijk wordt gemaakt wat dat dan precies concreet inhoudt. Ik heb hen niet nodig om te zien waar de problemen liggen in het land.”

p. 32). This was noticed by several journalists, who wrote that Hirsch Ballin was “the stable factor of the Cabinet” whose “mind is phenomenally quick.”<sup>170</sup>

No evidence supported the criteria in attribute domain C and D of the dominant pattern, but within attribute domain E, self-image, evidence was found that Hirsch Ballin referred to himself as an assertive (E1Aa) and competitive (E1Ab) personality, as demonstrated in the following quotations: “I think we have the answers. They are not in the big words but in good, long term policies”<sup>171</sup> (B1Aa, authoritative; E2a, confident; E6a, reliable). “I’m the first responsible for terrorism control and we know relatively well which of the Muslims are a threat and who are not”<sup>172</sup> (E1Aa, assertive; E1Ab, competitive; E2a, confident; E6a, reliable).

By asserting that the cabinet has the answers, Hirsch Ballin seemed to convince Parliament and the public that everything was under control. And by telling the world that he took his responsibility for terrorism control very seriously, and that he knew a terrorist when he saw one, he once again put those who were concerned at ease. Hirsch Ballin had both the personal and lawful authority to make those claims and to make them sound believable too, as the positive and admiring words about Hirsch Ballin that circulated in the media during his term as a cabinet minister have shown. With only 7 MIDC points on the dominant-asserting-

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<sup>170</sup> *De Volkskrant*, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.” Original text in Dutch: “De man is fenomenaal snel in zijn hoofd. Hooglerarentruc, zegt eerdergenoemde Kimman, die zelf bedrijfsethiek doceerde. ‘In die tijd beoordeelde hij scripties binnen vijf minuten.’”

<sup>171</sup> *De Telegraaf*, July 12, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fanatici pakken we aan.” Original text in Dutch: “Wij denken dat we betere antwoorden hebben dan de nieuwe bewegingen, die er vooral in slagen mensen te herinneren aan wat er niet goed is in ons land. De missie van dit kabinet is dat we de dingen die de mensen tot zorg strekken serieus nemen. Ik heb van Verdonk en Wilders geen enkel beter voorstel gehoord dan waar wij mee bezig zijn. Ik denk dat wij de antwoorden hebben. Antwoorden liggen niet in grote woorden, maar alleen in langdurig volgehouden goed beleid.”

<sup>172</sup> *De Telegraaf*, July 12, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fanatici pakken we aan.” Original text in Dutch: “Treden we in Nederland streng genoeg op tegen bijvoorbeeld fanatici uit moslimhoek?” “Ja, en dat is een deel van mijn werk. Om tegen fanatici op te treden. Die pakken we aan. Ik ben als eerste verantwoordelijk voor terrorismebestrijding in dit kabinet en we hebben een redelijke inschatting van wie onder de moslims in ons land een risico vormt.”

controlling pattern, Hirsch Ballin has not shown any exaggerated versions of the pattern, which may have helped him to ward off potential criticism.

**Ernst Hirsch Ballin: a Conscientious Appearance.** His communicated personality was investigated for this dissertation because the communicated personalities of selected cabinet ministers may help in developing an understanding of their public credibility (a combination of reliability, honesty, and competence as perceived by respondents in 2009 and 2010). Studying his communicated personality has helped to explain why his public credibility was relatively high throughout his term.

Throughout the source materials, Hirsch Ballin was complimented for his moral leadership skills, which were mainly concentrated on scale 6 (the conscientious pattern) and scale 1A (the dominant pattern). He was widely considered the stable factor of the cabinet: politically sophisticated, someone with high integrity, intelligent, forceful, and skilled both as a cabinet minister and a politician. He seemed to have built his political skills over the years, as he was not known for them during his first term as a cabinet minister in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as demonstrated in the following quotation: “‘Professor Inept’ from Lubbers [1989–1994, EW] turns into Wonder-child of the fourth Balkenende cabinet”<sup>173</sup> (B1Aa: authoritative). The source materials have revealed that he was not only known for his strong negotiation position with regard to the parliament, but also within the cabinet: “He is an important builder of bridges between parties in the fourth Balkenende cabinet”<sup>174</sup> (B1Aa, authoritative; A6a, dutiful).

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<sup>173</sup> *De Volkskrant*, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin.” Original text in Dutch: “De professorale brekebeen uit het derde kabinet-Lubbers ontpopt zich als het wonderkind van het vierde kabinet-Balkenende.”

<sup>174</sup> *De Telegraaf*, July 12, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fanatici pakken we aan.” Original text in Dutch: “Vriend en vijand dachten dat zijn terugkeer tijdelijk zou zijn, maar Hirsch Ballin kreeg de smaak te pakken en bleef. In Balkenende IV speelt hij zelfs een voorname rol als bruggenbouwer.”

Interestingly, when it comes to attaining credibility in the Netherlands, Hirsch Ballin's case shows that the two classic leadership patterns (1A, dominant and 2, ambitious) do not have to be the strongest patterns communicated to the public for Dutch citizens to believe in a cabinet minister and give him or her public credibility. Although Hirsch Ballin communicated only a little of scale 1A and almost nothing of scale 2, he attained a significant degree of public credibility. The only scale that stands out in his communicated personality profile is scale 6, the conscientious pattern. The fact that he was chosen as being among the few HPC cabinet ministers by respondents of the LISS panel, and the fact that conscientiousness was so clearly present within his communicated personality profile, may raise the question of whether his conscientious image helped him to attain higher levels of credibility.<sup>175</sup> Although causal relationships between variables cannot be proven with the methods used here, it appears that Hirsch Ballin has convinced the public that he is dutiful at work, respectful to colleagues and minorities, cautious with regard to terrorism, deliberate in dealing with the Parliament and the other cabinet members, systematic in fighting crime, serious when necessary, and reasonable when possible (see also Millon, 1996, p. 518). Over and over again, he made clear to the public how reliable and conscientious he was, which seemed to underscore his scale 6 communicated personality pattern.

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<sup>175</sup> How do citizens judge the credibility of other human beings? How does an image or impression occur? Immelman's work (2004) implies that in order to judge a leader (or any person), human beings make generalizations based on previous experiences with others. When they see, for example, dauntless behavior (scale 1B, the dauntless pattern), they may assume that the person is adventurous and individualistic, but could also be fearless, reckless, or irresponsible (these are some of the more exaggerated characteristics of the dauntless pattern). Furthermore, their social antenna tells them that retiring behavior (scale 8) may be followed by reserved or aloof behavior. From previous experiences with different personalities, people seem to intuitively know what is likely behind a person's expressive behavior. For example, those with retiring patterns may exhibit unengaged, unexcited, asocial, impoverished, or dispassionate characteristics (criteria of scale 8).

The rest of this dissertation, and especially the communicated personality profiles of the other selected cabinet ministers, will show whether the conscientious pattern turns out to be one of the most important communicated personality patterns for those who wish to attain higher public credibility in the Netherlands.

See also the MIDC study on Wim Kok by Christ'l de Landtsheer (2004; 2009; t' Hart, 2004). De Landtsheer studied the personalities of a few members of the so-called "Purple Cabinet." Wim Kok (Prime Minister of several "purple cabinets" and Balkenende's predecessor) was reportedly trusted by an exceptionally large percentage of the citizenry.<sup>176</sup> He was rarely criticized and more popular than some of the other influential politicians of the last three decades. According to De Landtsheer (2004, 2009), Wim Kok's MIDC personality profile exhibited the conscientious pattern (scale 6) to a substantial degree, just like Ernst Hirsch Ballin's (communicated) personality profile. De Landtsheer (2004, 2009) wrote that Wim Kok communicated almost none of the other patterns through the source materials. Since this is similar to the outcome of the study on Ernst Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile, and since both Wim Kok and Ernst Hirsch Ballin were widely respected (and trusted or believed to be reliable by Dutch citizens), De Landtsheer's study strengthens the conclusion that communicating more conscientious communicated personality patterns may help cabinet ministers to attain higher levels of public credibility in the Netherlands.

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<sup>176</sup> See 't Hart (2004) and Volkskrant 27-02-2010, katern 4, p. 29, Dutch title: "Stuurloos dobberen." English title translation by EW: "Rudderless Drift." Authors: Yvonne Doorduyn en Philip van Praag. Original text in Dutch: "Als het TNS Nipo-onderzoek iets blootlegt, dan is het wel dat deze politieke crisis de crisis van de leiders is. Géén van de huidige politieke kopstukken kan rekenen op veel vertrouwen als mogelijke minister-president. Waar vroegere leiders als Wim Kok, Hans van Mierlo of recenter Gerrit Zalm nog het vertrouwen kregen van meer dan de helft vande bevolking – bij Kok oplopend tot bijna 70 procent – komt Bos na de val van het kabinet op een schamele 34 procent."

Also, Ernst Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile has shown no exaggerated patterns, which may have helped him avoid being criticized in the media too frequently, which in turn may have helped him attain HPC. After all, a common human interaction principle dictates that exaggerated communicated personality patterns stick out more than subdued ones, and patterns that stick out may attract more criticism.

Furthermore, Hirsch Ballin's personality profile contains none of the more negative patterns that, by nature, could damage the image of a cabinet minister. Scale 5A (aggrieved), 7 (reticent), and 8 (retiring) can be problematic patterns, because the personalities often show themselves to be "unsure" or "inconsequential" (scale 5A); "guarded," "reserved," and "apprehensive" (scale 7); and "indifferent," "unengaged," or "unexcited" (scale 8). Hirsch Ballin is an HPC cabinet minister and communicated none of these patterns through the source materials dated between January 2008 and March 2010.

The analysis of Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality shows that the cabinet minister with the highest perceived reliability, honesty and competence scores communicates predominantly reliable, respectful, and dutiful characteristics (the conscientious pattern), combined with some stronger leadership qualities (the dominant pattern). This communicated personality profile has worked for Hirsch Ballin, who became an HPC cabinet minister in the Netherlands. However, it may not be the only element of a cabinet minister's appearance and performance that plays a role in understanding higher public credibility. Observations regarding Hirsch Ballin's operational performance will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

**Ministerial Style and Skills—Ernst Hirsch Ballin.** In order to determine whether Ernst Hirsch Ballin focused more on the political, public, connective, or rational (policy-making)

aspects of his job as Cabinet Minister of Justice between 2008 and 2010, two inner-circle respondents were asked to fill out the style test with their cabinet minister in mind.<sup>177</sup>

At the time of the interview (September 2010), interviewee SJ had been working as one of the cabinet minister's top advisors for over two years. The interviewee knew the cabinet minister well from an operational, cabinet ministerial perspective, since he spoke with the cabinet minister almost every day of the week. SJ's answers will be discussed in further detail below, since this advisor is closer to Ernst Hirsch Ballin and is therefore considered better informed than SA, the second inner circle interviewee. Also, SJ has given an in-depth interview regarding Ernst Hirsch Ballin, which led to richer, more elaborately discussed style assessment results.<sup>178</sup> SA filled out the style assessment for Ernst Hirsch Ballin, but was interviewed more elaborately about Piet Hein Donner, Ernst Hirsch Ballin's predecessor. The style assessment filled out by SA was used as a source of counter indications to SJ's knowledge about Ernst Hirsch Ballin. Since there were almost no differences in the two style assessments, SJ's answers can be considered a good source of information about Ernst Hirsch Ballin's style & skill profile. However, each style assessment result is still the reflection of an image. It is still an opinion and not the absolute truth. Each person may come to different conclusions, based on their own judgment and perspective.

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<sup>177</sup> Two interviewees (both policy advisors at the Ministry of Justice when Hirsch Ballin worked there) filled out the style assessment for him. On a 2-point scale (answers 1 and 2 are combined, as are answers 3 and 4), 14 out of 16 statements were rated identically by both respondents. They disagreed on two statements. Answers provided by interviewee "SJ" will be discussed below, because of all the inner-circle experts, he was the policy advisor who held the highest rank at the Ministry of Justice, and he was the closest acquaintance of Hirsch Ballin. Interviewee "SA" thought that the following two statements should be confirmed in the case of Hirsch Ballin, and interviewee "SJ" thought that they should be rejected: The minister is often willing to reach for a compromise; the minister is at his best in conflict situations.

<sup>178</sup> Following the style assessment, an in-depth interview (also called an Inner Circle interview) took place with SJ. The interview took approximately 1.5 hours. During the interview it became clear that the interviewee believes that Ernst Hirsch Ballin is one of the best cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. More interview results (Inner Circle opinions) will follow in paragraph 3 of this chapter.



The results of the style assessment show that Hirsch Ballin displayed equal and significant parts of the political, public, and connective style and even more of the rational style. Of all cabinet ministers selected as cases for further research, Hirsch Ballin's test showed the most balanced style profile and has the highest total score. This means that the interviewee believed that Hirsch Ballin was skilled in all four areas of a cabinet minister's job.

According to interviewee SJ, Hirsch Ballin:

- was convinced he was in the right;<sup>179</sup>
- had power that stretched far beyond his own portfolio;<sup>180</sup>
- built his public image carefully;<sup>181</sup>
- was often in the public eye because he knew how to get there;<sup>182</sup>
- had a lot of detailed knowledge;<sup>183</sup>
- often managed to build consensus;<sup>184</sup>
- was an expert on his policy portfolios;<sup>185</sup> and
- considered a lack of support among stakeholders to be a deal breaker.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet ("yes, certainly").

<sup>180</sup> Idem.

<sup>181</sup> Idem.

<sup>182</sup> Idem.

<sup>183</sup> Idem.

<sup>184</sup> Idem.

<sup>185</sup> Idem.

<sup>186</sup> Idem.

According to interviewee SJ, Hirsch Ballin was also highly competitive and very rational. He knew how to perform well for the media,<sup>187</sup> he valued meetings with stakeholders,<sup>188</sup> and he preferred scientific evidence over other types of information in decision-making processes.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, SJ believed that Hirsch Ballin was not at his best in conflict situations;<sup>190</sup> he did not always give excellent television performances,<sup>191</sup> but he was often willing to reach for a compromise.<sup>192</sup>

All four statements that belong to the rational style were confirmed by interviewee SJ, due to which the style and skill profile of Hirsch Ballin stands out in rationality. The rest of his profile consists of equal parts political, public, and connective patterns. Table 20 below shows a summary of Hirsch Ballin's styles and skill profile and the total number of points for each style. The data are displayed in a spider diagram in Figure 18, which shows Hirsch Ballin's style and skill profile at a glance.

Table 20

*Style and Skill Profile of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice, 2007–2010.*

Interview Date: September 2010. Interviewee: SJ.

Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly Yes	+4	+4	+4	+4
Yes	+1	+1	+1	+2

<sup>187</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, mostly”).

<sup>188</sup> Idem.

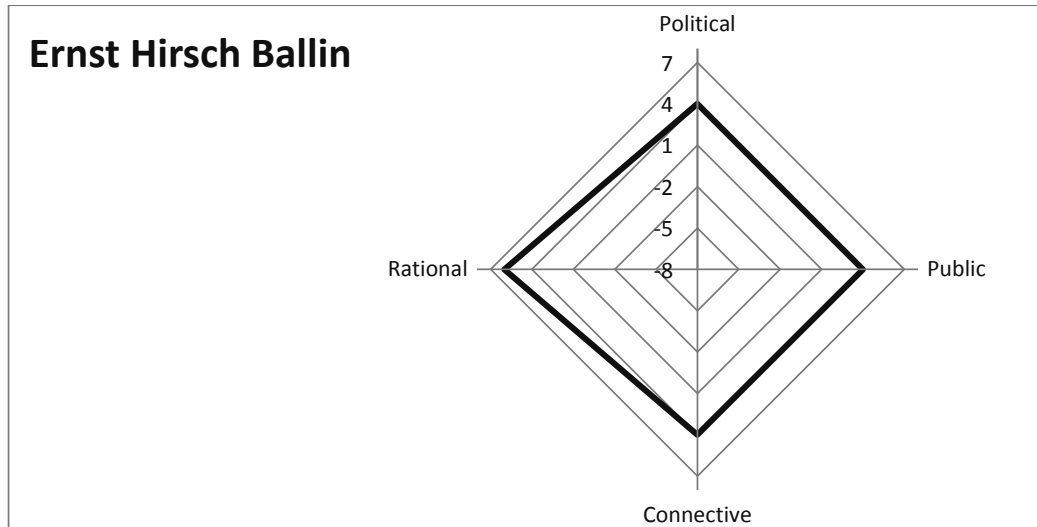
<sup>189</sup> Idem.

<sup>190</sup> Answer #3 or 4 on the style assessment sheet (“no, not really” and “no, not at all”).

<sup>191</sup> Idem.

<sup>192</sup> Idem.

No	-1	-1	-1	0
Certainly No	0	0	0	0
Sum	+4	+4	+4	+6



*Figure 18.* Style and skill profile of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 20.

The spider diagram in Figure 18 shows that Hirsch Ballin had a balanced style & skill profile, according to the interviewees. He was considered skilled on all four aspects of a cabinet minister's job.

The conceptual framework in Table 17 showed the (theoretical and practical) consequences of Hirsch Ballin's style profile. Hirsch Ballin was considered decisive and goal oriented (strengths of the political style), well considered, deliberative, and a good listener (strengths of the connective style); broadly accepted as a cabinet minister and outgoing

(strengths of the public style); and rational, with a focus on evidence-based decision making (strengths of the rational style).

Interviewee SA stated that Hirsch Ballin made an effort to handle the various roles every cabinet minister must play: switching between different political arenas (the focus of the political style), while making decisions based on evidence and experience (the focus of the rational style).

Inner-circle experts have stated that Hirsch Ballin, formerly a university professor, strongly valued a focus on facts and scientific evidence. Promoting evidence-based policies is one of the strengths of the rational style (see Table 17), which is Hirsch Ballin's most strongly developed style, according to his top advisor, SJ. However, a cabinet minister is a politician, which sometimes required Hirsch Ballin to make decisions based on political arguments, possibly at the cost of policy quality. The areas of the work of a cabinet minister can conflict with each other. Hirsch Ballin knew how to balance the styles and skills that are needed for every aspect of the job. But even Hirsch Ballin, who had the most balanced style profile of all cabinet ministers discussed in this dissertation, recognized the trouble of managing the different areas of work, according to interviewee SA.

For more interview comments that support these conclusions, see Chapter 8. All of the evidence discussed throughout this chapter (provided by inner-circle experts, the media, the parliament, and other sources) about Hirsch Ballin supports the hypothesis (or conclusion) that his rational style is likely the most pronounced, and that the three other styles were highly developed in him as well.

**Comparing Two Cases: Piet Hein Donner and Ernst Hirsch Ballin.** The style assessment has also been applied to Hirsch Ballin's predecessor at the Ministry of Justice and CDA colleague, Piet Hein Donner. The two cases are highly comparable on several variables.

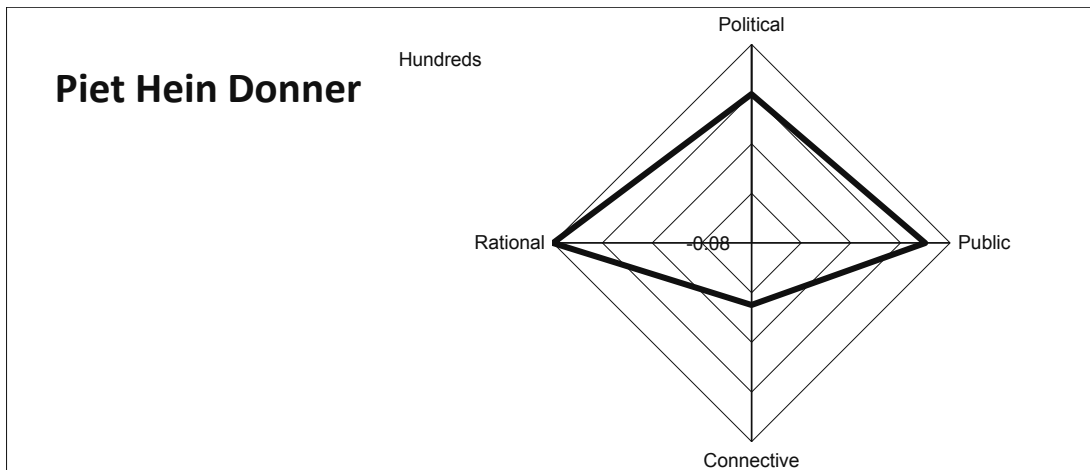
Both individuals were experienced cabinet ministers with a strong and mature image; they were both affiliated with the same political party (CDA); and they were considered important advisors and mentors of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, who is a few years their junior. They both ran the Ministry of Justice during several terms and through numerous political crises; they both have a background as a university professor; inner-circle experts have stated that they both have a great sense of humor; and neither was known for a willingness to reach a compromise (connective style). Hirsch Ballin, however, was able to attain higher public credibility, while in the cabinet term between 2007 and 2010, Donner attained a medium amount of public credibility. Comparing the two cases in terms of their ministerial style and skills may help to understand the link between the style and skills of a cabinet minister and his or her public credibility. The results are visible in Table 21 and Figure 19.

Table 21

*Style and Skill Profile of Piet Hein Donner, Cabinet Minister of Social Affairs, 2007–2010.*

Interview Date: February 17 2009. Interviewee: BM.

Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+4	+4	0	+8
Yes	+1	+2	+2	0
No	-1	0	-1	0
Certainly no	0	0	-4	0
Sum	+4	+6	-3	+8



*Figure 19.* Style and skill profile of Piet Hein Donner, Cabinet Minister of Social Affairs, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 21.

The differences between the two cabinet ministers are as follows. According to the interviewees, Hirsch Ballin seemed to be more popular among members of Parliament and advisors at the ministry; Hirsch Ballin also had more public credibility than Donner (see the credibility survey in Part II of this dissertation). Last, Hirsch Ballin had a more balanced style and skill profile.

According to the inner-circle experts, Hirsch Ballin had a highly developed connective style, while Donner had a negative number of points on the connective style; (Donner did not consider connecting with stakeholders a priority in his schedule, while Hirsch Ballin did). Furthermore, Donner gave excellent television performances, while Hirsch Ballin did not (public style). Interviewee JS explained that the television performances of Hirsch Ballin sometimes lacked the power to make regular people understand his message because of his “professor-like” appearance and the way he talked. According to JS, Hirsch Ballin was sometimes unable to adjust to the level of regular citizens when he spoke about certain topics. It appears that Hirsch

Ballin had everything Donner had, and more, except the ability to give excellent television performances, as assessed by inner-circle experts.

**Ernst Hirsch Ballin: a Balanced Style and Skill Profile.** How can one understand the concept of public credibility by looking at the style and skill profile of Ernst Hirsch Ballin? He was considered skillful in all four aspects of a cabinet minister's job, and his rational style stood out. His predecessor, Piet Hein Donner, had a much less balanced style profile and did not make the effort Hirsch Ballin made to compromise and build bridges with other politicians. Also, connecting with stakeholders was a priority to Hirsch Ballin but not to Donner. The energy Hirsch Ballin spent building his connective style may have helped him to create goodwill among many politicians and stakeholders.

The fact that Hirsch Ballin did not always give excellent television performances according to inner-circle experts, while Donner did, did not make Donner more credible than Hirsch Ballin, which is surprising. After all, many might expect that television performances influence public credibility more than any other factor. However, the comparison between Donner (the cabinet minister with less public credibility) and Hirsch Ballin (who attained more public credibility) has shown that performing well on television may not be the only way to attain higher credibility. In Donner's case, it does not seem to have helped enough.

As Hirsch Ballin's case demonstrates, perhaps a high score on all styles and skills is a way of attaining higher levels of credibility. This makes sense, because a high score on all styles and skills shows that inner-circle experts believe the cabinet minister is good at all aspects of the job. Whether there are other ways to attain higher credibility will become clear in the next chapter, where the style and skill profile of Ronald Plasterk, a very different type of cabinet

minister than Hirsch Ballin and Donner, will be analyzed and discussed. First, however, several opinions on Hirsch Ballin's policy performance will be analyzed in the next paragraph.

**Policy Goal Realization—Ernst Hirsch Ballin.** Like all cabinet ministers, Ernst Hirsch Ballin was in office to solve problems, maintain the system, and make it work more effectively and more efficiently. Hirsch Ballin agreed on a long list of policy goals to be realized within the cabinet term of 4 years (it turned out to be only 3 years, from February 2007 to February 2010). The current paragraph shows which of the goals were realized and which were not, after 2 years of the cabinet term (in May 2009). Later on in the dissertation, the goal realization of all selected cabinet ministers will be compared and the question of whether HPC cabinet ministers realize more goals than LPC cabinet ministers do will be answered.

Each Dutch cabinet begins with the creation of a key document, in which the cabinet policy plans (with policy goals and sub-goals, as well as a time schedule) are presented for the next 4 years. Then, to make sure that the plans are being realized, the entire Dutch cabinet publicly accounts for its actions and accomplishments once a year, on a Wednesday in May called Accountability Day.<sup>193</sup> Well before that day, the cabinet begins writing the so-called Accountability Report (*Verantwoordingsrapport*, TK 31951), in which cabinet ministers each discuss to what extent they are “on track” with their goals and sub-goals.<sup>194</sup> The Parliament

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<sup>193</sup> In Dutch: “Verantwoordingsdag.”

<sup>194</sup> Realisation. (2008). Attachment Accountability Report (In Dutch: “bijlage verantwoordingsbrief”).



receives the document and carries out independent research to determine whether the claims of the cabinet are evidence-based, and calls for each cabinet minister to explain his or her accomplishments thus far, on Accountability Day, which is ironically called “Wednesday Ground Beef Day.”<sup>195</sup>

In the Accountability Report of 2009,<sup>196</sup> Hirsch Ballin provided a brief update about the policy results thus far. He claimed to have realized 100% of his goals in 2008. Two of these goals were “key goals” of the cabinet term. On one goal, information was missing (goal number 49). At the time, Hirsch Ballin ran the ministry together with State Secretary Albayrak, who was responsible for the immigration and naturalization of foreign citizens and three out of 14 policy goals attributed to the Ministry of Justice. Besides the 14 policy goals (11 for Hirsch Ballin and

2008 Beleidsdoelen									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74						
Projecten↓				Sleuteldoelen					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

<sup>195</sup> In Dutch: “Woensag Gehaktdag.”

<sup>196</sup> The Balkenende IV cabinet only accounted for its actions twice: in May 2008 it published its first report (about its goal realization in 2007) and in May 2009 it published its second and last report. Its term was shortened by one year. Instead of publishing its third Accountability Report in May 2010, the Cabinet resigned in February. In the spring of 2010, the Cabinet was demissioned, awaiting new elections.

three for Albayrak), Hirsch Ballin was involved in four other policy goals of the cabinet, in collaboration with other cabinet ministers. The goals that will be under study most elaborately in this paragraph are 11 policy goals executed by the cabinet minister himself (see “first responsibility” in Table 22). These goals are mainly concentrated in Part V of the cabinet policy program.<sup>197</sup> One goal belonged to Part VI (“government responsiveness”). The goals and the extent to which Hirsch Ballin was on track in May 2009 will be discussed below. Data sources of the analysis in this paragraph are the Accountability Report (written by the cabinet), the Parliament’s response to the report, the inner-circle interviews on performance, and the response of the Court of Audit, in case they had explicit concerns about the cabinet minister’s accomplishments.

Table 22

*Policy Goals of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice, 2007–2010, as of May 2009*

First Responsibility	First executive = State Secretary	Second Responsibility	Realization
	13		Realized
		16	Key goal
Goal 49 (respect)			Missing information Key goal
Goal 50 (25% crime reduction)			Key goal

<sup>197</sup> The cabinet program was called “Safety, Stability and Respect,” 2007.

P-10			Realized
54 (no coffee shops in school areas)			Realized
56 (new identification system)			Realized
57 (crime, fraud and cybercrime)			Realized
58 (prostitution license policy)			Realized
		59	Realized
60 (strong defense terrorism)			Realized
61 (networks of safety)			Realized
62 (safety houses)			Realized
66 (social corporations)			Realized
		69	Realized
	70		Realized
	71		Realized
	72		Realized – Key goal

**Policy Goals.** Hirsch Ballin's policy goals were diverse, ranging from "enhancing respectful and decent human interaction within society" (goal 49) to "25% crime reduction compared to 2002" (goal 50), and "a new identification system in 2010" (goal 56). A few goals will be discussed below, to illustrate Hirsch Ballin's policy portfolio. All goals displayed in Table 22 are described in Appendix 19.

Some of Hirsch Ballin's goals seem difficult to accomplish. For example, the success of goal 50 (a key goal: 25% crime reduction) depends on many variables, some of which are unknown, because government success is likely not the only factor that influences crime rates.<sup>198</sup> Goal number 50 is difficult to accomplish and results are ambivalent in reality, but at least there is an infrastructure to measure successes and losses. Criminal acts visible to the police are measured by the police force and reported to the cabinet periodically. In the case of goal number 50, Hirsch Ballin was on track, according to the cabinet statistics. Other goals, such as goal number 49 ("Enhancing respectful and decent human interaction within society"), are not only difficult to accomplish, they lack measurable results as well. Furthermore, there are certain goals, such as goal number 56, that are concrete and have measurable results once the decision is politically cleared.

After the political decision has been made, introducing the new identification system is a matter of informing and preparing the institutions and organizing the implementation.

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<sup>198</sup> For example, the Donohue-Levitt hypothesis (see Levitt and Dubner, 2005) is based on the theory that legalizing abortion can reduce crime. Donohue and Levitt refer to studies showing that of all people, the ones who commit most crimes are young males (ages 18–24). Donohue and Levitt believe that the reduction of crime in 1992 in New York was not a result of a better police force or excellent government strategies. They state that the legalization of abortion in 1973 resulted in unwanted children remaining unborn, which led to a reduction in crime 18 years later. The theory is subject to controversy, but it nevertheless shows that variables other than direct government actions could cause crime fluctuations as well. In other words, several categories of variables are likely to influence crime reduction in the Netherlands, and Ernst Hirsch Ballin's policy making is only one of them.

Unfortunately for the Cabinet Minister of Justice, most policy goals were as ambivalent as goal number 50 (crime reduction), and results were as difficult to measure as the results of goal number 49 (respect). However, the cabinet believed that Hirsch Ballin was on track in May 2009 with most of the goals. A full list of all Hirsch Ballin's policy goals and a description of the results (translated from Hirsch Ballin's part of the Accountability Report published in May 2009), can be found in Appendix 19.

**Accountability Day: Parliament Comments and Concerns.** The Accountability Report (TK 31951) is written by cabinet ministers and their policy advisors at the ministry. From a rational perspective, each cabinet minister has a strong incentive to try to convince the public and the Parliament that everything is under control at their ministry and that the cabinet is on track. The Parliament is aware of that incentive, of course, and gathers its own information to research the claims of the cabinet.<sup>199</sup> Therefore, on Accountability Day in 2009, the Parliament questioned Hirsch Ballin's goal realization. Some highlights from the report of the plenary debate between members of Parliament and Hirsch Ballin will be discussed below. The words were spoken in Dutch during Accountability Day on May 28, 2009 (TK 31924), in the plenary room of the Parliament building in The Hague.<sup>200</sup>

During Accountability Day, the CDA (Hirsch Ballin's own party) was rather skeptical about the Accountability Report of the Ministry of Justice: "Regardless of the decline of bicycle lifting and heavy crime, people feel unsafe. Numbers don't say everything."<sup>201</sup> The CDA

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<sup>199</sup> NB. The Parliament claims that there are not enough resources to carry out independent research and fully control the Cabinet, as described in a Parliament self-reflection in 2009 (TK31 845, "Vertrouwen en zelfvertrouwen, Uitkomsten en vervolg Parlementaire zelfreflectie.") Retrieved from [http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/publieksversie\\_pz.pdf](http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/publieksversie_pz.pdf)

<sup>200</sup> Some quotes were translated into English for the purpose of discussing them in this book.

<sup>201</sup> Accountability Day on May 28, 2009 (TK 31924).

spokesman made another critical remark: “Prevention is important, but not the only thing society needs the cabinet minister to do.”<sup>202</sup> However, the spokesman complimented the cabinet minister on his zero-tolerance policy with respect to certain fields of crime.

The VVD criticized Hirsch Ballin on his results: “According to the Cabinet there has been a 25% crime reduction. That’s nice, but the number of registered robberies has increased by 26% since the start of the Cabinet,” said the spokesman. Then he concluded, “This cabinet minister is not on track” (Parliament debate TK 31924, 2009). According to the VVD:

- “Detective and expellation work should be focused on both criminal and non-criminal foreigners who have been rejected by the Dutch state.”
- “The Cabinet should focus more on repression instead of prevention” (the CDA spokesman made the same comment).
- “Closing prisons is not smart right now.”
- “The Cabinet should be careful not to label criminals as victims.”
- “Shop owners increasingly refuse to register crime that has been taking place in their store because they think the state will not prosecute” (the spokesman shows research findings about shoplifting).
- “The cabinet minister deserves a compliment for his efforts to decrease violence against public officers.”

An SGP spokesman acknowledged that cabinet minister Hirsch Ballin has done good work fighting alcohol abuse among teenagers and young adults. However, the SGP was worried as

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<sup>202</sup> Idem.

well. According to the party spokesman, this goal was not on track and the cabinet needed to be more ambitious about getting on track.

The PVDA and other parties pointed out that it is unfortunate that policy goal number 52 (about the police force, see Appendix 19) was not on track. Although Hirsch Ballin shared responsibility with the Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on this goal, the parties criticized the Cabinet Minister of Justice for not being on track, since decreasing social deprivation (through police force) was considered one of Hirsch Ballin's priorities. Crime prevention was closely linked to this goal, so the Cabinet Minister of Justice and the Cabinet Minister of the Interior depended on each other for progress. Although all of Hirsch Ballin's own goals were on track, which makes his goal realization look perfect, the Parliament pointed out an unaccomplished responsibility.

On Accountability Day, the Parliament took the time to discuss Hirsch Ballin's portfolio and crime and safety in general. Other than the ones mentioned above, none of the comments indicated precisely what Hirsch Ballin could have done better. Nor did any member of Parliament accuse Hirsch Ballin of not being a good cabinet minister, of not doing a good job, or of failing fundamentally. The remainder of the debate on Accountability Day concerned a discussion between the political parties about what they should do to make the country a safer place. The parties did not agree with each other on a strategy, which showed the complexity of the themes within Hirsch Ballin's portfolio. Some parliamentarians agreed with Hirsch Ballin's focus, while others did not.

Altogether, except for the SGP and VVD comments, the Parliament seemed to be satisfied with the cabinet minister's progress. Since Hirsch Ballin's portfolio was inflammatory and complex, and since there is always room for critical remarks on safety issues (because a

crime-free world does not exist and factual safety and perceived safety are not always on the same level), Hirsch Ballin proved to be able to keep the political parties relatively satisfied.

**Interview Comments on Ernst Hirsch Ballin's Goal Realization and Dealing with Parliament.**<sup>203</sup> During one of the inner-circle interviews, the communications advisor of a political party stated that "Ernst Hirsch Ballin runs a difficult Ministry and one of the most complex portfolios. But he has been able to keep the ship steady."<sup>204</sup> A top advisor of Hirsch Ballin who worked at the Ministry of Justice at the time of the interview said:

Ernst Hirsch Ballin has this talent to comfort parliamentarians by telling them that he totally understands their worries, and that he is worried too. He has a very empathic style and wins them over with charm and authority at the same time. That and his wisdom make him win every debate.<sup>205</sup>

One of the cabinet advisors who (at the time of the interview) worked at the Ministry of General Affairs, said that Hirsch Ballin "knows how to turn a political or policy goal into a success by mastering all of the steps of the policy making process: from analysis to decision-making to implementation." According to the interviewee, "this explains how Hirsch Ballin actually gets things done (...). His most important policy success in 2008 has been building the Safety Houses, due to which I believe the people's safety at the municipality level is about to increase."<sup>206</sup>

Based on information from the Accountability Report and the parliamentary discussion on Accountability Day in May 2009, it looks as though Hirsch Ballin successfully realized his

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<sup>203</sup> See Part III for a methodological discussion of the inner-circle interviews.

<sup>204</sup> JF, Parliament, March 2009.

<sup>205</sup> JWS, Ministry of Justice, March 2009.

<sup>206</sup> ZR, Ministry of General Affairs, January 14, 2009.



policy goals and sub-goals and was on track with the goals for which he carried top responsibility. Also, he successfully convinced the Parliament that he had everything under control.

Throughout his term, Hirsch Ballin was widely considered a successful cabinet minister in the political arena, possibly because he did what he signed up for: realizing the policy goals for which he had taken responsibility in February 2007. During the inner-circle interviews, Hirsch Ballin was spoken of as a cabinet minister who did his job conscientiously and with grace, humor, and authenticity. No significant counter-indications were found.

**Ernst Hirsch Ballin's Appearance and Performance – Discussion.** During his term as Cabinet Minister of Justice for the Balkenende IV cabinet, Ernst Hirsch Ballin was an HPC cabinet minister, since he was considered one of the most reliable, honest, and competent ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet, according to respondents of the LISS panel in 2009 and 2010. His communicated personality profile, style and skill profile and policy goal realization as discussed in this chapter have helped to develop an understanding of HPC cabinet ministers in the Netherlands.

First of all, Hirsch Ballin seemed to have attained higher credibility by appearing highly conscientious, dutiful, reliable, and respectful (the conscientious pattern of the MIDC), and also commanding, at times forceful, authoritative, and assertive (the dominant pattern of the MIDC).

Second, he has set himself apart with his style and skill profile, which included all of the styles, indicating that he mastered every key aspect of being a cabinet minister: he connected with stakeholders as much as parliamentarians; he led his ministry and communicated through the media in successful ways. Interestingly, the public style seemed to be his least developed style, as his television and media appearances were not perfect, according to the inner-circle

experts. Interviews have shown that the communications advisor of Hirsch Ballin pointed out how the cabinet minister could have given much better television performances by speaking in a way the audience was able to understand—with shorter sentences, for example. However, his otherwise balanced style profile may have helped him earn the respect of many circles, and his “professor-like” appearance may not have installed a lot of sympathy among citizens, but it made him appear reliable and competent.

Answering the question of whether and how style and skill may influence the public credibility of cabinet ministers (and other politicians) requires further research. Ronald Plasterk’s case will likely help to understand the link between style and skill profile and public credibility, since two HPC cases create a better foundation for conclusions than one.

The inner-circle opinions from Chapter 8 and 12 showed how well respected and liked Hirsch Ballin was during his term. The policy and communications advisors of the Ministry of Justice, and those employed at the other ministries, all thought that Hirsch Ballin was doing an outstanding job as a cabinet minister. Whether the positive inner-circle image of Hirsch Ballin has anything to do with his higher public credibility, or vice versa, needs to be investigated further by comparing HPC cases to one another. Hirsch Ballin was on track with his policy goals mid-term and Parliament was fairly satisfied with his performance.

As a cabinet minister in the Balkenende IV cabinet, Hirsch Ballin was able to withstand the tests of this dissertation. Aside from a few critical comments on his television skills, his overall performance seemed almost flawless. Only a thorough analysis of the other HPC cabinet minister, Ronald Plasterk, could reveal if there are more ways to perform as a higher-credibility cabinet minister, and what those ways might be. Can a cabinet minister attain HPC without a well-developed conscientious personality pattern? And is a flawless operational performance,

including policy goal realization, always a necessity for attaining HPC? The next chapter will reveal some answers.

## Chapter 13: Ronald Plasterk

In Part II of this dissertation, Ronald Plasterk's public credibility was studied and compared to the credibility of his fellow Balkenende IV cabinet ministers. Like Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Plasterk is an example of a higher public credibility cabinet minister. During the last 2 years of his cabinet term (in 2009 and 2010), the LISS panel respondents thought he was exceptionally reliable (75.5%) and honest (71.5%). A slightly lower, but still good number of LISS panel respondents believed he was competent (66.3%). At the end of Part II, Plasterk was selected as a case for further research on his performance, to search for clues that could help in developing an understanding of his public credibility. Was Plasterk, like Hirsch Ballin, a cabinet minister who communicated mainly the conscientious and dominant personality patterns? Did he display the political, connective, rational, and public style, and therefore master all four aspects of a cabinet minister's job? Did people in his inner circle like him and did they believe he was a good cabinet minister, and did he realize all of his policy goals? In other words, did Plasterk perform like Hirsch Ballin, or can other types of performance be linked to attaining higher credibility as well? The research revealing answers to all of these questions took place in 2008, 2009, and 2010. The results will be discussed in this chapter.

**Communicated Personality Profile—Ronald Plasterk.** In this paragraph, the MIDC will be applied to media articles about Plasterk to determine his communicated personality patterns. The sources used to gather information about Plasterk are mostly press articles with a biographical element, some of which contain quotes by people who were interviewed by the journalist in order to write the article. Different sources reveal different perspectives on Plasterk. The cabinet minister will be displayed as a colleague, a boss, a politician, a cabinet minister, a family member, and a friend. Eventually, the communicated personality patterns of Plasterk will

be used to create a better understanding of media appearance, which may somehow be linked to higher public credibility.

To diagnose Plasterk's communicated personality patterns, 210 articles published between February 2008 and March 2010 were analyzed and labeled according to the MIDC method (Immelman, 2004).<sup>207</sup> These articles (from newspapers and magazines) were published during the 3 years after the beginning of the cabinet and before the final credibility measurement took place, which was just after the cabinet resigned in February 2010. All quotes from the articles can be found in Appendix 17. The score sheet in Table 23 has been used to diagnose Plasterk's communicated personality by means of the adapted MIDC, as discussed in Part IV.

Table 23

*MIDC Score Sheet for Ronald Plasterk's Communicated Personality between January 2008 and March 2010.*<sup>208</sup>

	Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, 2007–2010								
	1B			2			3		
Gradation points	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
A	1	2		1	2		1	2	
B	1	2		1	2		1	2	
C	1	2		1			1	2	
D	1	2					1	2	

<sup>207</sup> For an extended discussion of the methods used in this paragraph, see Part IV.

<sup>208</sup> Written sources

E	1	2	3	1	2		1	2	
46 RAW	21			10			15		
100 %	45.6			21.7			32.6		

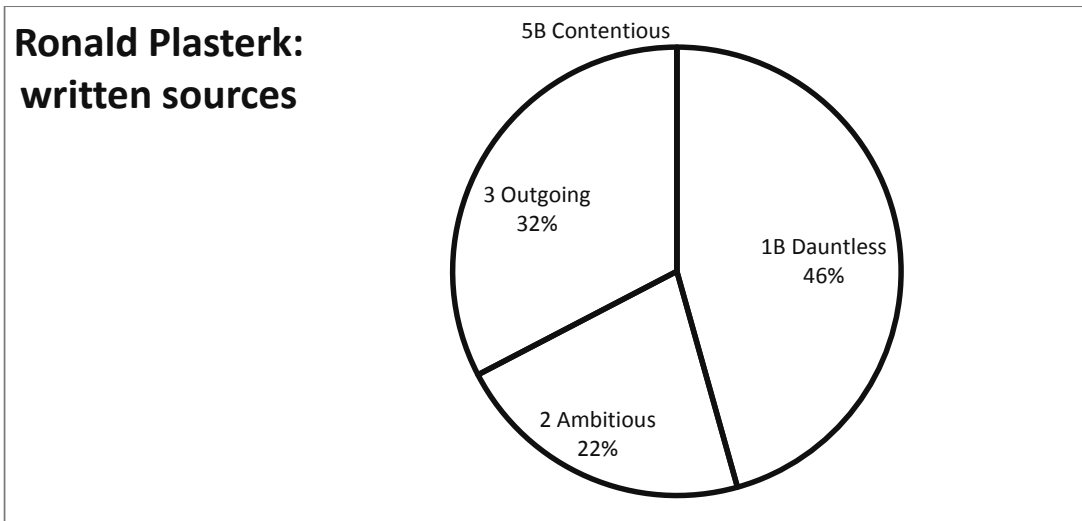


Figure 20. MISC pie chart of Ronald Plasterk's communicated personality between January 2008 and March 2010, based on data from Table 23.

#### **Results of MISC Analysis: Ronald Plasterk's Communicated Personality Patterns.**

Before Plasterk started his term, he was publicly known as a biologist and columnist. Most of the people who are quoted talk about the cabinet minister with joy and admiration. Comments about Plasterk note that he is "genetically destined to do the unexpected"<sup>209</sup> and "the first cabinet minister who openly analyzes why the elections for the European Parliament were a fiasco for

<sup>209</sup> Het Financieele Dagblad, February 17, 2007 Saturday, Title: "Plasterk in de kerk" (Plasterk in the church) by Paul Schnabel. Original text in Dutch: "Hij is genetisch voorbestemd voor het onwaarschijnlijke. Hij kan echt alles, tot marathonlopen en de Matthäus zingen toe."

the PvdA.”<sup>210</sup> The most common critical notes are triggered by Plasterk’s communicated outgoing pattern (scale 3). Some of his fellow politicians point out that Plasterk can come across as unreflective (C3a) and superficial (C3b), although some journalists suggested that these politicians might have said that because they were jealous of Plasterk’s success.

The way Ronald Plasterk communicated his personality, and the way others presented him in the media, reveals a single strong pattern (scale 1B, the dauntless-venturesome-dissenting pattern), two medium-strong patterns (scale 3, the outgoing-congenial-gregarious pattern and scale 2, the ambitious-confident-self-serving pattern) and one faint pattern (scale 5B, the contentious-resolute-oppositional pattern, not on score sheet). Plasterk was presented through the source materials as a cabinet minister who was mainly dauntless and venturesome (scale 1B, dauntless, 46%), outgoing and congenial (scale 3, outgoing, 33%), and ambitious and confident (scale 2, ambitious, 22%).

**The Strength of Evidence and Range of Personality Types.** Table 24 shows an overview of Plasterk’s communicated personality profile. Scale 1B (the dauntless pattern) and scale 3 (the outgoing pattern) are best represented within Plasterk’s communicated personality profile. These patterns have the highest scores, and the source materials provide quotes that refer to criteria from each of the attribute domains (A–E).<sup>211</sup>

On scale 1B, the dauntless pattern, Plasterk’s communicated personality has 21 points, which means there would be “robust evidence for a Level III personality type; the basic

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<sup>210</sup>AD/Algemeen Dagblad, June 10, 2009, woensdag, Title: “‘PvdA moet minder elitair’—cabinet minister Plasterk: Partij weet niet meer wat in wijken leeft.” Original text in Dutch: “Hij is de eerste bewindspersoon uit de PvdA-top die openlijk probeert te analyseren waardoor de Europese verkiezingen op een fiasco zijn uitgelopen.”

<sup>211</sup> As explained before, Immelman’s attribute domain A represents expressive behavior, B represents interpersonal conduct, C represents cognitive style, D represents mood/temperament, and E represents self-image (Immelman, 2004).

personality type is prominent,” but only if the justification of “identification at the third level (scored 3 points) in all five attribute domains” (Immelman, 2004, p. 16) would be met. This is not the case. Instead, there is identification at the second level in all five attribute domains. Consequently, Immelman’s conclusion (2004) would be that there is “robust evidence for a Level II personality type; the basic personality type is prominent” (p. 15). However, Immelman’s text needs to be rewritten for the purpose of studying communicated personalities (by EW) instead of biographical personalities (by Immelman): There is robust evidence for a Level II *communicated* personality type; the basic personality type is prominent within Plasterk’s *communicated* personality profile. In other words, people who were reading newspaper articles about Plasterk between 2008 and 2010 have likely learned that the cabinet minister was relatively dauntless and possibly venturesome.<sup>212</sup>

On scale 3, the outgoing pattern, the cabinet minister’s communicated personality has 15 points and on scale 2, the ambitious pattern, his communicated personality has 10 points. In Immelman’s original method, there would be “minimal evidence for a Level II personality type; the basic personality pattern is strongly present and within the normal range” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). In this study about communicated personalities, the diagnosis is slightly different: There is minimal evidence for a Level II *communicated* personality type; the basic personality pattern is strongly present within the *communicated* personality and within the normal range.

The source materials provided more evidence on scale 3 (the outgoing pattern) than on scale 2, the ambitious pattern. Between 2008 and 2010, Plasterk’s outgoing communicated

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<sup>212</sup> This is where the MIDC as applied here differs from the original MIDC as applied by Immelman (2004). Immelman would conclude that there is “robust evidence for a Level II personality type” in the target person’s personality profile (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). In this book, however, the aim is not to study real, biographical personalities, but communicated personalities: the way personalities are portrayed in the newspaper; that is, the way the target person’s personality *emerges to citizens who read the article*.



personality was stronger than his ambitious communicated personality (scale 3 makes 33% of his communicated personality, scale 2 only 22%). Also, the source materials provided quotes on all five attribute domains (A–E) of scale 3, the dauntless pattern, while no evidence was found to claim that Plasterk communicated the criteria of attribute domain D (mood/temperament) in scale 2 (D2a = poised, D2b = insouciant).

Table 24

*Overview of Ronald Plasterk's Communicated Personality Profile, as Measured between January 2008 and March 2010. Written sources.*

Scale	Attributes	Points	Evidence	Level	Diagnosis
Dauntless	A, B, C, D, E	21	Robust	II	Prominent
Outgoing	A, B, C, D, E	15	Minimal	II	Normal range
Ambitious	A, B, C, E	10	x	x	x

Below, the four patterns of Plasterk's communicated personality profile and the evidence from press articles published in Dutch newspapers and opinion magazines will be discussed. The order in which the patterns are discussed corresponds to the order of the patterns in Table 24.

**Discussion of Ronald Plasterk's Communicated Personality Profile.**<sup>213</sup> Immelman (2004) states:

At the well-adjusted pole [of the dauntless pattern] are adventurous, individualistic, venturesome personalities. Exaggerated Dauntless features occur in unconscientious, risk-taking, dissenting personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the

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<sup>213</sup> Only a few of the quotes from the source materials will be included below to keep the text as compact as possible. For an extended overview of the evidence from the source materials, see Appendix 18.

dauntless pattern displays itself in reckless, irresponsible, self-aggrandizing behavior patterns. (pp. 22–23)

Although Plasterk's dauntless communicated personality pattern is the most present within his communicated personality profile, and although many features of the dauntless pattern were recognized in the source materials, no evidence has shown that Plasterk has communicated any exaggerated features. Instead, he seemed to be an "independent thinker" and did not shy away from criticizing the political establishment:

Two years ago Plasterk had a flying start. Plasterk was the first cabinet minister who, in the Queen's annual speech, dared to admit that there are bad schools. He wrote that there should be more room for instruction and less for general development.<sup>214</sup> (A1Bb, fearless; B1Ba, individualistic; E1Ba, self-sufficient; E1Bb, unfettered; E1Bc, autonomous; A2a, confident; E2a, confident; E2b, admirable)

According to Immelman (2004), "normal, adaptive variants of the dauntless pattern (i.e., venturesome and dissenting types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's Adventurous style" (Immelman, 2004, p. 23). Oldham and Morris (1995) have listed the characteristics that are often found in adventurous individuals (people with an "adventurous style") as follows:

- Nonconformity
- Challenge
- Mutual independence
- Persuasiveness (pp. 227–228)

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<sup>214</sup> *de Volkskrant*, 15 augustus 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: "Twee jaar geleden kwam Ronald Plasterk flitsend uit de startblokken. Plasterk was de eerste minister die in een Troonrede ronduit durfde toe te geven dat er slechte scholen bestaan. Hij schreef dat er meer aandacht moest komen voor instructie, terwijl de aandacht voor ontplooiing van de leerlingen wel wat minder kon."

These features typify the communicated personality of Plasterk remarkably well. The evidence from the source materials that shows how the features of the adventurous style have framed Plasterk's communicated personality throughout his term as a cabinet minister will be discussed below.

According to Oldham and Morris (1995), "nonconformity" means that people with the adventurous style "live by their own internal code of values; not strongly influenced by the norms of society" (pp. 227–228). Plasterk came across as a typical non-conformer in the sense of Oldham and Morris's adventurous style. A good example of this is the fact that, in spite of his Catholic upbringing, he became a convinced and public atheist and introduced an alternative belief system with the Dutch term *ietsisme* ("something-ism"). Tofik Dibi, a green-left parliamentarian at the time, was enthusiastic when Plasterk became the Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, because he remembered Ronald Plasterk as a columnist who "would stretch boundaries. He had a critical attitude towards religion."<sup>215</sup> Plasterk communicated non-conformism in more than one way. He not only made his own rules when it came to religion, but also in politics as a cabinet minister. One of the sources reveals that not every parliamentarian was pleased by his unconventional approach:

Part of the irritation is caused by the way Plasterk approached the Parliament. Over and over again he goes his own way. First, he chooses Arnhem [as a location for the museum, EW], even though a majority of the Parliament wants [the museum to be located in] The

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<sup>215</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, "Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk." Original text in Dutch: "'Joepie, dat kan leuk worden!' Tofik Dibi, Kamerlid van GroenLinks, was enthousiast toen Ronald Plasterk in februari 2007 aantrad als minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (OCW). Tot die tijd keek Dibi graag naar Plasterks optreden als columnist in het tv-programma Buitenhof: 'Hij zocht grenzen op. Hij was kritisch op religie. Dat was leuk, zeker voor jongeren.'"

Hague. Then he announces the name of the new ambassador of the museum. To everyone's surprise it is a parliamentarian: Atzo Nicolaï of the VVD party.<sup>216</sup> (B1Ba, individualistic; B1Bb, unconscientious; C1Bb, unconventional; E1Bb, unfettered; E1Bc, autonomous; A2b, conceited; b2B, entitled; C3a, unreflective; A5Ba, nonconformist; B5Bb, obdurate)

With the term “challenge,” Oldham and Morris (1995) are pointing out that adventurous individuals are bold and that they like to take risks (pp. 227–228). Before he became a cabinet minister, Ronald Plasterk was known to like challenges, such as running marathons, pursuing a career in molecular biology, and communicating his unconventional opinions on national television. As a biologist turning cabinet minister, he was soon called a “token atheist” in the Christian reformed Balkenende IV cabinet. Plasterk was also called “the devilish scientist,”<sup>217</sup> and later in his term he risked smooth cooperation in the cabinet by appearing “wildly enthusiastic” during the “Gay Pride” parade he attended to represent the Balkenende IV cabinet.<sup>218</sup> “The PvdA seems to have chosen [Plasterk] for the role of ‘token atheist’ in this extraordinary Christian reformed cabinet. Ronald Plasterk, the ‘devilish’ scientist, is Cabinet

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<sup>216</sup> *De Volkskrant*, July 3, 2009, “Gevaarlijk nonchalant Plasterk heeft geen haast meer; reconstructie Het geruzie om het Nationaal Historisch Museum.” Original text in Dutch: “Maar de irritatie komt ook voort uit de manier waarop Plasterk de Kamer heeft benaderd. Steeds gaat hij zijn eigen gang. Eerst met de keuze voor Arnhem, hoewel een Kamermeerderheid eigenlijk voor Den Haag is. Daarna maakt hij in het tv-programma Buitenhof de kwartiermaker van het nieuwe museum bekend. Tot verbazing van velen is het een Tweede-Kamerlid: Atzo Nicolaï van de VVD.”

<sup>217</sup> *Trouw*, March 21, 2007, “De opvallende loopbaan van minister Ronald Plasterk; tv vooraf.” Original text in Dutch: “de PvdA lijkt hem als ‘excuus-heiden’ in dit buitengemeen gereformeerde kabinet te hebben gezet. Ronald Plasterk, de ‘duivelse’ wetenschapper, is minister van Onderwijs, Wetenschap en Cultuur geworden.”

<sup>218</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 4, 2008, “We tonen: in Nederland hoort iedereen erbij;” Interview Ronald Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “‘Heb je het gehoord? We zijn op het nieuws in Zuid-Afrika!’ Wild enthousiast heeft minister voor (homo) emancipatiebeleid Ronald Plasterk (51) zijn eerste Gay Pride in functie beleefd.”

Minister of Education, Culture and Science”<sup>219</sup> (A5Ba, nonconformist; A5Bb, resistant; C5Ba, freethinking; C1Ba, original; C1Bb, unconventional).

The third feature of adventurous individuals discussed by Oldham and Morris (1995) seems to be part of Plasterk’s communicated personality as well: “mutual independence.” It means that people with an adventurous style seem “not overly concerned about others” (Oldham & Morris, 1995, pp. 227–228). In several cases, Plasterk came across as someone who was indeed not overly concerned about the feelings of other people: “Bio-ethicist Henk Verhoog [quit] the Committee for biotechnology in animals, because he felt like Plasterk denigrated him”<sup>220</sup> (B1Bb, unconscientious).

Also, the source materials show that an architect who was hired by Plasterk to draw plans for a new museum was very offended when cabinet minister Plasterk did not recognize her work, which had taken 6 weeks of her time:

Francine Houben ... feels that Plasterk has treated her wrongly. After she and former director of the Dutch Open Air Museum had worked for six weeks, day and night, on a plan for the museum in Arnhem, and won the competition, the Ministry completely ignored them. She writes in her column that ... [Houben:] ‘Plasterk commented shortly afterwards that I had made a hasty little sketch. I left early ..., completely stunned.’<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *Trouw*, March 21, 2007, De opvallende loopbaan van minister Ronald Plasterk; tv vooraf. Original text in Dutch: “de PvdA lijkt hem als 'excuus-heiden' in dit buitengemeen gereformeerde kabinet te hebben gezet. Ronald Plasterk, de 'duivelse' wetenschapper, is minister van Onderwijs, Wetenschap en Cultuur geworden.”

<sup>220</sup> *De Telegraaf*, March 21, 2007, Profiel Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “De bio-ethicus Henk Verhoog, die geëmotioneerd ontslag nam uit de Commissie biotechnologie bij dieren, omdat Plasterk hem ‘denigrerend’ behandelde.”

<sup>221</sup> *De Volkskrant*, July 3, 2009, Gevaarlijk nonchalant Plasterk heeft geen haast meer; reconstructie Het geruzie om het Nationaal Historisch Museum. Original text in Dutch: “Van Vroonhoven kent de woede van architecte Francine Houben, die wakker ligt van hoe Plasterk haar heeft behandeld. Nadat zij en toenmalig directeur van het Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, Jan Vaessen, met hun in zes weken met dag en nacht werken in elkaar getimmerde plan het museum voor Arnhem hebben binnengesleept, worden ze straal genegeerd door het ministerie. In haar column in

(B1Bb, unconscientious; D1Bb, heedless; E1Ba, unfettered; E1Bb, autonomous; C3a, unreflective; C3b, superficial; A5Ba, nonconformist; B5Bb, obdurate)

The fourth feature of adventurous individuals also illustrates that Plasterk came across as a cabinet minister with “persuasiveness” in the newspapers. According to Oldham and Morris (1995), people with an adventurous style are “silver tongued charmers talented in the art of social influence” (pp. 227–228). Plasterk was called a “media genius professor,”<sup>222</sup> who miraculously “won Bos’ confidence”<sup>223</sup> and quickly became “the second man of the PvdA.”<sup>224</sup> According to a source, Plasterk became the “number one [most popular] cabinet minister of the entire cabinet,”<sup>225</sup> was called “a great public performer” who was “empathic,”<sup>226</sup> and was appointed in

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Het Financieele Dagblad schrijft Houben dat ze bij de opening van het Filmfestival Rotterdam naast Plasterk zit. ‘Hij heeft het over een vluchtig schetsje dat ik zou hebben gemaakt! Met stomheid geslagen verlaat ik voortijdig het festival.’”

<sup>222</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “De mediagenieke professor.”

<sup>223</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Belangrijker nog: Plasterk wist het vertrouwen te winnen van Wouter Bos. Zo was de vrijetijdspoliticus uit Bussum als adviseur van de PvdA-leider achter de schermen betrokken bij het opstellen van het regeerakkoord.”

<sup>224</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Sindsdien opereert Plasterk in het kabinet als vooruitgeschoven post van het PvdA-smaldeel. Zijn oud-collega Ella Vogelaar noemt hem in haar dagboek Twintig maanden knettergek de tweede man van de PvdA.”

<sup>225</sup> Maurice de Hond has an opinion panel, with which he regularly measures the popularity of Dutch politicians. “Popularity” differs from “credibility” in several ways, one of which being the fact that credibility is the sum of three things Dutch citizens consider characteristics of a “good cabinet minister”: reliability, honesty, and competence. Perceived reliability, perceived honesty, and perceived competence are the three combined scales of credibility. More on this topic in Part I. Ronald Plasterk is one of the most credible cabinet ministers between 2009 and 2010, according to Dutch citizens represented by the LISS panel. He also happens to be one of the most “popular” cabinet ministers, as measured by Maurice de Hond, who uses his own opinion panel. Source of the quote: *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Qua populariteit was Plasterk bij opiniepeiler Maurice de Hond lang zelfs de nummer één van het hele kabinet - inmiddels moet hij partijgenoot Eberhard van der Laan (Integratie) voor zich dulden.”

<sup>226</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. “Dresscher vindt Plasterk publicitair heel sterk en prijst zijn inlevingsvermogen. ‘Daarmee heeft hij een streepje voor in een politiek klimaat dat door de media wordt bepaald. In het kabinet heeft hij een stevige positie. Hij is het boegbeeld van de PvdA, waar de minste krassen op zitten.’”

order to give the PvdA “a face.”<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, he was soon known for wearing “a dashing borsalino hat” and being “fond of parties and a glass of champagne.” According to the sources, Plasterk “seems to have no problem getting away with this image.”<sup>228</sup>

The next feature of an adventurous individual is “wanderlust.” Oldham and Morris (1995) found that the adventurous style is typical for people who “like to keep moving; live by their talents, skills, ingenuity, and wits” (pp. 227–228). Plasterk was said to “enjoy life to the fullest and with extravagance.”<sup>229</sup> The same source explained that for “his entire life Plasterk has been floating through. Whatever he does, he does it with determination and he signs up for the biggest success.”<sup>230</sup>

Furthermore, Oldham and Morris (1995) stated that part of the adventurous style is a “no regrets” mentality. Adventurous people “live in the present; do not feel guilty about the past or anxious about the future” (Oldham & Morris, 1995, pp. 227–228). This, too, fits the impression Ronald Plasterk has made through the media during his term as Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science:

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<sup>227</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Dibi roept in herinnering dat Plasterk door Wouter Bos het kabinet is binnengehaald om de PvdA ‘smoel te geven.’”

<sup>228</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas. Original text in Dutch: “Met zwierige borsalinoheid en niet vies van een feestje en een glas champagne. ... En die daar overigens buitengewoon goed mee weg lijkt te komen.”

<sup>229</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas, Original text in Dutch: “Ging ie hardlopen, dan moest de finish van de marathon van New York worden gehaald. Werd hij cultuurminister, dan spijkerde hij zijn architectuurneeds bij door in één keer een halve meter boeken te verslinden. En als geboren Hagenaar gaat hij toch maar voor Ajax omdat die tenminste nog eens bovenaan staat (valt er weer es wat te vieren). Verder studeerde hij cum laude af en stond hij aan de wereldtop op zijn vakgebied. Daarbij geniet hij met volle teugen van het leven, niet vies van enige extravagantie.”

<sup>230</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas, Original text in Dutch: “Wat hij ook onderneemt, hij doet het met toewijding en hij gaat voor het grootste succes.”

No criticism? Some find it wrong that the cabinet minister visits the scene with nude  
behinds. “I’ve seen literally one person who yelled ‘boo’. The other 499.999 people were  
enthusiastic. Oh well, when it is carnival there will be a thong or two as well.”<sup>231</sup>  
(C1Ba, original; C1Bb, unconventional; A2a, confident; B5Ba, unyielding; C5Ba,  
freethinking)

Based on the written source materials, it can be said that, most likely, people who have  
read about the cabinet minister have seen someone described by Oldham and Morris (1995) as an  
adventurer: “Plasterk stated, ‘I hope people will look back and say: they handled it well in the  
Netherlands at the start of the 21st century. They kept afloat in a globalizing economy’”<sup>232</sup> (A2a,  
confident; B2a, self-asserting; C2a, imaginative; E2a, confident).

The second communicated personality pattern that was supported by evidence in the  
source materials about Ronald Plasterk is the outgoing-congenial-gregarious pattern. The  
following quote illustrates Ronald Plasterk’s outgoing communicated personality pattern (and  
also some of scale 2, the ambitious pattern): “‘Have you heard? We’re on the news channel in  
South Africa!’ Wildly enthusiastic, the cabinet minister for Homo Emancipation experienced his  
first Gay Pride as a cabinet minister”<sup>233</sup> (A1B1, adventurous; C1Ba, original; C1Bb,

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<sup>231</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 4, 2008, ‘We tonen: in Nederland hoort iedereen erbij’; Interview Ronald Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Geen onvertogen woord? Critici vinden het ongepast dat een minister zich tussen de blote billen begeeft. ‘Ik heb welgeteld één persoon gehoord die ‘boe’ riep. De 499.999 anderen waren enthousiast. En ach, je ziet met carnaval ook wel eens een string.”

<sup>232</sup> *De Volkskrant*, April 23, 2007, “Nog 'n gouden eeuwje, dat zou mooi zijn”; Interview Ronald Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Ik hoop dat mensen later terugkijken en zeggen: dat hebben ze in Nederland aan het begin van de 21ste eeuw goed aangepakt. Ze hebben in een globaliserende economie het hoofd boven water gehouden.”

<sup>233</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 4, 2008, “We tonen: in Nederland hoort iedereen erbij”; Interview Ronald Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “‘Heb je het gehoord? We zijn op het nieuws in Zuid-Afrika!’ Wild enthousiast heeft minister voor (homo-)emancipatiebeleid Ronald Plasterk (51) zijn eerste Gay Pride in functie beleefd.”



unconventional; A2a, confident; B2a, self-asserting; C2a, imaginative; E2a, confident; A3b, dramatic; D3a, expressive; A5Ba, nonconformist; C5Ba, freethinking).

Immelman (2004) explains that patterns can be present within the target person's personality in three different intensities. When it comes to the outgoing pattern, "at the well-adjusted pole are warm, congenial personalities" (Immelman, 2004, p. 30). Plasterk's communicated personality comes across in the source materials as slightly exaggerated, as he often seemed "sociable [and] gregarious" in newspaper articles. Furthermore, the description of the more extreme version of this personality pattern may fit his appearance as well, depending on the source, because "in its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, extraversion manifests itself in impulsive, self-centered, overdramatizing behavior patterns" (Immelman, 2004, p. 30). Readers of newspaper articles have likely developed a picture of Plasterk somewhere between the well-adjusted version and the most deeply ingrained version, depending on who is asked. Because of the nature of some of Plasterk's topics (such as homo-emancipation), the cabinet minister may have offended some while winning the admiration of others. For example, a person with religious, conservative values may have found Plasterk "impulsive," "self-centered," and "overly dramatic," while a progressive reader may have had the impression that he was just being "sociable" and "congenial." One reporter questioned his presence at the Gay Pride: "Your colleague from the Christian Union called it 'maybe a little provocative' in the presence of your coalition partners and accused you of turning it into a PvdA-party." Plasterk replied,

I have not done such thing. The entire cabinet was invited. I can't help it that only PvdA people show up. It was never my intention to point out the differences. Everybody needs to decide for themselves whether they are going or not. Many colleagues were on a

holiday break. I am representing the entire cabinet.<sup>234</sup> (B1Ba, individualistic; A2a, confident; B2b; entitled, B5Ba, unyielding; C5Ba, freethinking)

Millon (1994a) wrote that people with an outgoing personality type “enjoy engaging in social activities” and “possess a personal style that makes people like them. ... They are talkative, lively, and socially clever” (p. 32). Outgoing personalities have “enthusiasms [that] often prove[s] effective in energizing and motivating others” (Millon, 1994a, pp. 31–32). This aspect of Plasterk’s communicated personality may have inspired the journalist who wrote the following piece:

The Hague has a new Ministry, according to opinion Magazine HP/De Tijd. At the top of the “Ministry of Parties and Gatherings” is Ronald Plasterk, with dashing borsalino hat and fond of parties and a glass of champagne. A breath of fresh air, if you ask us, compared to fibbing Calvinistic cabinet ministers [the author targets Eimert van Middelkoop, who hurt his arm, EW].<sup>235</sup> (C1Ba, original, C1Bb, unconventional, A2a, confident, B2b, entitled, A3a, sociable, B3a, demonstrative, B3b, attention-seeking, C3a, unreflective, C3b, superficial, E3a, charming, E3b, gregarious, C5Ba, freethinking)

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<sup>234</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 4, 2008, “We tonen: in Nederland hoort iedereen erbij;” Interview with Ronald Plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Uw collega Van Middelkoop van de ChristenUnie noemt het 'misschien een beetje provocerend' tegenover de coalitiepartners, dat u er een PvdA-feestje van hebt gemaakt. 'Ik heb er helemaal geen PvdA-feestje van gemaakt. Het hele kabinet was uitgenodigd. Dat er alleen PvdA'ers komen, daar kan ik niets aan doen. Het is nooit mijn bedoeling geweest om op verschillen te wijzen. Iedereen moet zelf weten of hij op een uitnodiging ingaat. Er waren veel collega's met vakantie, geloof ik. Ik representeer hier de hele regering.’”

<sup>235</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas. Original text in Dutch: “Den Haag heeft er een nieuwe portefeuille bij, afgaand op het nieuwe nummer van HP/De Tijd: het ministerie van feesten en partijen. Aan het hoofd: Ronald Plasterk. Met zwierige borsalinohood en niet vies van een feestje en een glas champagne. Een verademing, vergeleken met jukkende calvinistische ministers in mitella, als je het ons vraagt, maar het opinieblad verwondert zich in een profiel van Plasterk terecht over het succes van de bètawetenschapper die de prins carnaval van het Binnenhof werd. En die daar overigens buitengewoon goed mee weg lijkt te komen.”

According to the journalist, Plasterk's public credibility was not harmed significantly after being typified as the "Cabinet Minister of Parties and Gatherings," but he points out that some questions are being raised about his competences as a cabinet minister, as seen in the following quotation: "But the opinion magazine is right when it wonders whether the beta scientist, who became prince Carnival, has any success [as a cabinet minister, EW]"<sup>236</sup> (C1Ba, original, C1Bb, unconventional, A2a, confident, B2b, entitled, A3a, sociable, B3a, demonstrative, B3b, attention-seeking, C3a, unreflective, C3b, superficial, E3a, charming, E3b, gregarious, C5Ba, freethinking). This sentiment is also voiced in the following:

[Plasterk] does his job with passion and purpose, but it didn't work out. I do understand that you don't want to favor your own people [too much]. He doesn't want to pray for his own parish. ... But within the PvdA and the Cabinet he should put his foot down more often.<sup>237</sup> (E1Ba, self-sufficient, E1Bb, unfettered, E1B c, autonomous, C5Ba, freethinking)

Millon (1994a) has pointed out that this is part of the outgoing personality type, because the pitfall of an outgoing image is that "gregarious types are sometimes viewed as fickle and excitable" (pp. 31–32). But there is hope, because "on the other hand, ... inclined to be facile and

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<sup>236</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas. Original text in Dutch: "Den Haag heeft er een nieuwe portefeuille bij, afgaand op het nieuwe nummer van HP/De Tijd: het ministerie van feesten en partijen. Aan het hoofd: Ronald Plasterk. Met zwierige borsalinoheid en niet vies van een feestje en een glas champagne. Een verademing, vergeleken met jukkende calvinistische ministers in mitella, als je het ons vraagt, maar het opinieblad verwondert zich in een profiel van Plasterk terecht over het succes van de bètawetenschapper die de prins carnaval van het Binnenhof werd. En die daar overigens buitengewoon goed mee weg lijkt te komen."

<sup>237</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. "Een professor die zelf het hoger onderwijs ging doen, dat beloofde volgens Oosterwijk veel. 'Hij heeft zeker hart voor de zaak, maar het is er niet uitgekomen. Ik begrijp wel dat je je eigen club niet wilt voorttrekken. Hij wil niet preken voor eigen parochie. Maar binnen de PvdA en het kabinet moet hij meer met zijn vuist op tafel staan.'"

enterprising, outgoing people may be highly skilled at manipulating others to meet their needs” (Millon, 1994a, pp. 31–32). And indeed, the source materials have shown plenty of Plasterk as a serious, smart, and ambitious politician: “Plasterk won Wouter Bos’ confidence. This is how ... [he] became a behind-the-scenes force when new cabinet plans were being made”<sup>238</sup> (A2a, confident, B2a, self-asserting).

The source materials have demonstrated that Plasterk seemed to excel in combining a sociable, charming, expressive demeanor with confidence and originality. Sometimes demonstrative and seemingly fickle, the source materials show a cabinet minister and former scientist who is also smart and successful. This type of communicated personality (and its potential success in terms of public credibility) can be understood by looking at Oldham and Morris’s (1995) dramatic style:

Dramatic types are all heart. They have been granted the gift of feeling, with which they color the lives of everyone around them. When possessed of great talent, Dramatic [Outgoing] men and women can transform human emotion into the highest art form. Even in their daily lives, their wit, their laughter, their sense of beauty, their flamboyance, and their sensuality can lift the spirits of a roomful of strangers. All the world’s a stage for individuals with this very common personality style. Life is never dull or boring for them and certainly not for those who share it with them. Dramatic [Outgoing] people fill their world with excitement; things happen in their lives. (p. 131)

The following quote, in which Plasterk is described, resembles the above:

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<sup>238</sup> *De Volkskrant*, August 15, 2009 zaterdag, Mediageniek zondagskind is de baas over een leeg nest; profiel / ronald plasterk. Original text in Dutch: “Belangrijker nog: Plasterk wist het vertrouwen te winnen van Wouter Bos. Zo was de vrijetijdspoliticus uit Bussum als adviseur van de PvdA-leider achter de schermen betrokken bij het opstellen van het regeerakkoord.”

His entire life, Plasterk has been floating through. Whatever he does, he does it with determination and he signs up for the biggest success. He went running and made it to the finish of the Marathon in New York. He became Cabinet Minister of Culture and read half a meter of books about architecture in one single session. He prefers Ajax over his hometown soccer club because at least Ajax wins every once in a while. Furthermore, he graduated cum laude and belonged to the world's top in his field of science. He enjoys life to the fullest and with extravagance. The hat is a known fact, but who knew he drives an American eight cylinder (Ford Crown Victoria), the vehicle brings his family, including teenager sons Willem and Wouter and maybe even his lizards Jolly and Jumper (notice the alliterations), his two pets?<sup>239</sup> (C1Ba, original, C1Bb, unconventional, A2a, confident, A3a, sociable, B3a, demonstrative, B3b, attention-seeking, D3a, expressive, E3a, charming, E3b, gregarious, C5Ba, freethinking)

**Ronald Plasterk: a Dauntless-Outgoing Appearance.** Plasterk's communicated personality was investigated for this dissertation because the communicated personalities of selected cabinet ministers may help to explain their public credibility (a combination of reliability, honesty, and competence as perceived by respondents of the LISS panel in 2009 and 2010). In Plasterk's case, his communicated personality may help explain why his public

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<sup>239</sup> *Trouw*, February 12, 2009, Pipo Plasterk en zijn allitererende leguanen; bladen Jonathan Maas, Original text in Dutch: "Zijn hele bestaan tot nu toe glijdt Plasterk al door het leven. Wat hij ook onderneemt, hij doet het met toewijding en hij gaat voor het grootste succes. Ging ie hardlopen, dan moest de finish van de marathon van New York worden gehaald. Werd hij cultuurminister, dan spijkerde hij zijn architectuurkennis bij door in één keer een halve meter boeken te verslinden. En als geboren Hagenaar gaat hij toch maar voor Ajax omdat die tenminste nog eens bovenaan staat (valt er weer es wat te vieren). Verder studeerde hij cum laude af en stond hij aan de wereldtop op zijn vakgebied. Daarbij geniet hij met volle teugen van het leven, niet vies van enige extravagantie. De hoed is bekend, maar wie wist er van zijn Amerikaanse achtcilinder (Ford Crown Victoria) waar het gezin Plasterk zich in verplaatst, inclusief de puberzonen Willem en Wouter en misschien ook wel de leguanen Jolly en Jumper (let op de alliteraties), zijn twee huisdieren?"

credibility was relatively high throughout his term, and especially in January 2009 and March 2010.

Throughout the source materials, Plasterk was complimented for his autonomous, original, and unconventional way of thinking; his enthusiasm, charm, and sense of style; and his accomplishments as a scientist and former columnist. His communicated personality was mainly concentrated in scale 1B (the dauntless pattern) and scale 3 (the outgoing pattern). He was soon considered an important player within the PvdA next to Wouter Bos. But he received more than just compliments. According to the source materials, he offended quite a few people during the course of his term. He came across as unconscientious in a few articles that gave a voice to people who had worked with him and were surprised, and sometimes hurt, by his seemingly haughty demeanor. Also, a few authors wrote articles in which they accused Plasterk of partying too much and neglecting his work as Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science.

Interestingly, when it comes to attaining credibility in the Netherlands, Plasterk's case reveals that a venturesome and slightly dramatic image, with some unconscientious and seemingly unreflective behavior, does not necessarily harm a cabinet minister's perceived reliability, honesty, and competence to the point where it becomes a threat to his or her public credibility. After all, Plasterk has communicated some of the good and some of the bad aspects of scales 1B and 3 within the source materials in 2008, 2009, and 2010, and he was still an HPC cabinet minister. Next is an analysis of two aspects of Plasterk's operational performance: his style & skill profile, and his policy goal realization.

**Ministerial Style & Skills—Ronald Plasterk.** To determine whether Plasterk focused more on the political, public, connective, or rational (policy-making) part of his job as Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science between 2008 and 2010, two inner-circle

respondents were asked to fill out the style test with their cabinet minister in mind. The respondents were granted anonymity. They will be referred to as RH and MR.

At the time of the interview (October 2010), interviewee RH had been working as one of the cabinet minister's top policy advisors and managers of the Ministry of Education for three years. Before that, he worked for Plasterk's predecessor, Maria van der Hoeven, in a similar position. The interviewee spoke with Plasterk almost every day of the week. RH's answers will be discussed in further detail below. RH seemed to have developed a dislike for Plasterk, which is why an additional interview with MR will be discussed in detail as well. MR, also a top-level policy advisor and director at the ministry, but one level below RH, was interviewed in July 2009, shortly after he moved to a department that was directly advising Plasterk. MR has given an in-depth interview about Plasterk, which led to rich, elaborately discussed style assessment results.<sup>240</sup>

The results of the style assessment indicate that Plasterk displayed equally low amounts of the connective and rational style (-4 points), and that the public style stood out (+6 points). The political style was mildly present within his style & skill profile (+1). Where Hirsch Ballin had a balanced style profile, Ronald Plasterk's skills seem to concentrate on one style, as interviewee RH said that he:

- built his public image carefully;<sup>241</sup>
- gave excellent television performances;<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Following the style assessment, an in-depth interview (also called inner-circle interview) took place with MR. The interview took approximately 1 hour. During the interview it became clear that the interviewee believes that Plasterk was a very different cabinet minister than his predecessors, and also that MR liked Plasterk as a person.

<sup>241</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet.

<sup>242</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet.

- was often in the public eye, because he knew how to get there;<sup>243</sup> and
- was good at media performances.<sup>244</sup>

The other statements that applied to Plasterk according to interviewee RH were the following:

- The cabinet minister is strongly convinced to be in the right.<sup>245</sup>
- The minister is highly competitive.<sup>246</sup>
- For the cabinet minister, a lack of support among stakeholders can be a deal breaker.<sup>247</sup>

The first two statements belong to the political style and the third one the connective style. Interviewee RH was under the impression that Plasterk was not willing to strive for very many compromises, that he did not value meetings with stakeholders enough, and that he did not manage to build enough consensus among decision makers on key topics.

None of the rational style statements were confirmed by interviewee RH. RH believed that Plasterk was lacking certain policy-making skills or interest in the policy-making aspects of the job. During the interview, RH seemed to be far from pleased with Plasterk for choosing his priorities outside of the ministry. Interviewee RH believed that Plasterk did not have a lot of detailed portfolio knowledge and that he was not very rational (his emotional or intuitive side may have played a larger role in making decisions). Furthermore, according to interviewee RH,

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<sup>243</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet.

<sup>244</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet.

<sup>245</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet.

<sup>246</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet.

<sup>247</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet.



Plasterk did not generally prefer scientific evidence over other types of information.

Additionally, RH did not consider Plasterk to be an expert on his policy portfolio.

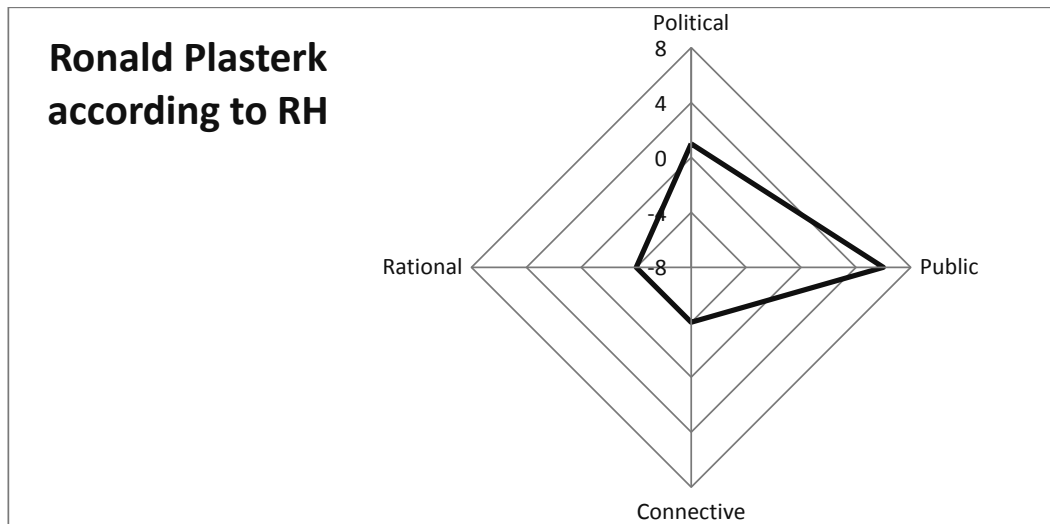
Table 25 shows a summary of Plasterk's style and skill profile and the number of points the interviewee gave him on each style. The data are displayed in a spider diagram in Figure 21, which shows Plasterk's styles and skills at a glance.

Table 25

*Style and Skill Profile of Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science*

2007–2010. Interview Date: October 2010. Interviewee: RH.

Ronald Plasterk's style and skill profile according to RH				
Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+2	+4	0	0
Yes	+1	+2	+1	0
No	-2	0	-1	-4
Certainly no	0	0	-4	0
Sum	+1	+6	-4	-4



*Figure 21.* Style and skill profile of Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 25 (respondent RH).

The spider diagram in Figure 22 reveals that Plasterk, contrary to Hirsch Ballin, has little balance in his style and skill profile, as perceived by interviewee RH. If RH is right, Plasterk would be skillful mainly on just one aspect of a cabinet minister’s job. When the interviewee was asked whether other policy advisors at the ministry had the same opinion of the cabinet minister, he replied, “I speak for the majority of policy advisors at the Ministry when I say that [Ronald] Plasterk is not very popular here.” According to RH, Plasterk’s external view has made insiders at the ministry feel neglected. The core business of policy advisors is to execute new policies and to maintain “the policy system.” RH was indeed not the only interviewee who thought Plasterk was either not good at policy making or did not consider it a priority. Interviewee JF, who worked in the Parliament as a communications advisor, said that:

Ronald Plasterk is doing a good job. He is a nice guy and smart as well. But his policies are slightly invisible to the public. It is always the State Secretary who announces new

policies. Plasterk is competent though. He maintains a broad network and is good at connecting main stakeholders.<sup>248</sup>

Since RH has shown signs of personal dislike towards Plasterk, his view of the cabinet minister may be biased, even though RH was one of Plasterk's most experienced policy advisors who managed a major part of the ministry. Although all style and skill profiles in this dissertation are based on opinions, and are therefore not neutral, it is better to strive for interview results that are unaffected by any strong negative feelings on the part of the interviewee. Therefore, the opinions of a second interviewee will be discussed below.

The second interviewee, MR, agreed with interviewee RH that Plasterk had all the skills of the public style (he "builds his public image carefully," "gives excellent TV performances," "is often in the public eye because he knows how to get there," and "is good at media performances"). MR also believed that Plasterk was "highly competitive," which refers to the political style. So far, the two interviewees agree. But according to interviewee MR, Plasterk had more than just one political skill. He was often "convinced to be in the right" and had some "power outside of his own portfolio." This means that Plasterk had the power to influence decisions in the cabinet and his political party (PvdA). MR thought that Plasterk had some connective skills as well: He was "willing to reach for a compromise" and "managed to build consensus."

One aspect of the rational style was added to Plasterk's style profile: Interviewee MR believed that he was "more rational than emotional." Plasterk's lack of points on the rational style according to both interviewees is surprising, because most cabinet ministers who are former

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<sup>248</sup> JF, March 2009. Similar observations in interviews with FF, August 15, 2008 and interview with CW, January 14, 2009.

scientists, like Ab Klink, Ernst Hirsch Ballin, and Piet Hein Donner, were considered good to excellent at this aspect of the job. Both interviewees agreed that Plasterk did not “prefer scientific evidence over other information in a decision-making process”, that he was not considered an “expert within his own policy portfolio,” and that he lacked “detailed portfolio knowledge.”

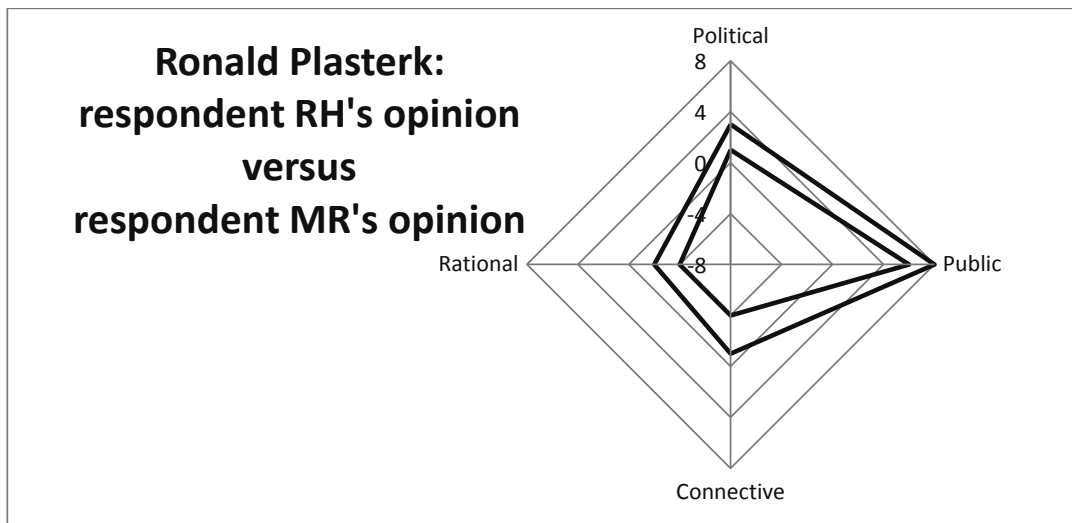
Furthermore, MR agreed with RH that, for Ronald Plasterk, a lack of support among stakeholders does not have to be a deal breaker in a policy-making process and that he was not a cabinet minister who strongly valued meetings with stakeholders. This gave Plasterk a negative number of points on the connective style & skill set.

Table 26

*Style and Skill Profile of Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture and Science*

2007–2010. Interview Date: July 2009. Interviewee: MR.

Ronald Plasterk’s style & skill profile according to MR				
Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+2	+8	0	0
Yes	+2	0	+2	+1
No	-1	0	-1	-3
Certainly no	0	0	-2	0
Sum	+3	+8	-1	-2



*Figure 22.* Style and skill profile of Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture and Science, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 25 (respondent RH) and 26 (respondent MR).

**Ronald Plasterk's Style and Skill Profile: Final Remarks.** Despite some differences between the opinions of the two interviewees, the spider diagrams of Ronald Plasterk's styles and skills have the same general shape. This empowers the style assessment as a methodological instrument: The style assessment outcome of two independent interviewees, who disagree on what a higher-credibility cabinet minister is, are comparable, even though one of them had developed a strong personal antipathy towards the cabinet minister. Both interviewees considered Plasterk's public style his most pronounced style: They believed that Plasterk was mainly a spotlight seeker in his first term as a cabinet minister.

The style test results help to understand public credibility, because they show that the style and skill profile of a cabinet minister does not have to be balanced in order to attain higher credibility: Ernst Hirsch Ballin's style and skill profile was balanced, while Ronald Plasterk's was not. It also demonstrates that giving excellent television performances and knowing how to

find one's way into the public eye can be valuable assets of a cabinet minister, and may have even helped Plasterk to become an HPC cabinet minister.

Furthermore, the comparison of Ronald Plasterk's style and skill profile with the profiles of Maria van der Hoeven and Ab Klink in Appendix 21 have shown that:

- his well-developed public style may have helped Plasterk to attain more public credibility than Klink and Van der Hoeven;
- being liked or admired in the inner circle does not guarantee public credibility;
- being disliked in the inner circle does not necessarily take away the ability of a cabinet minister to attain higher public credibility;
- having a well-developed connective or rational style alone does not guarantee public credibility;
- it may be difficult or impossible to attain higher credibility without the well-developed media skills of the public style.

More research on this topic is necessary to determine whether these hypotheses can withstand further testing. Part VI contains additional analyses on the style and skill profiles of MPC and LPC cabinet ministers.

**Policy Goal Realization—Ronald Plasterk.** Throughout his term between February 2007 and February 2010, Plasterk's portfolio consisted of many policy goals. A numerical majority of these goals were executed by state secretaries. These state secretaries (Marja van Bijsterveldt and Sharon Dijksma) shared responsibility for the realization of policy goals with Plasterk, but he carried final responsibility as the Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science. It is common for a cabinet minister to be assisted by one or two state secretaries, but in the case of Plasterk, the state secretaries were responsible for a large and important part of the

policy portfolio: daycare, preschool, and primary education (Dijkma) and secondary education and lower professional education (van Bijsterveldt). More than half of his goals were executed by the two state secretaries (seven out of 12). He executed only five policy goals himself. In the Accountability Report, the cabinet claims that Plasterk was on track with 100% of his policy goals in 2008.<sup>249</sup> The state secretaries were responsible for their parts of the portfolio and had to account for their work to the cabinet minister and also to the parliament. This paragraph shows which of the goals had been realized after 2 years of the cabinet term, and which had not. Later on in this dissertation, the goal realization of all selected cabinet ministers will be compared in order to determine whether a link might exist between goal realization of a cabinet minister (in other words: policy success) and his or her higher credibility.<sup>250</sup>

The goals that will be under study most elaborately in this paragraph are five policy goals executed by Plasterk himself (see “first responsibility” in Table 27). These goals were mainly

<sup>249</sup> Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report (In Dutch: “bijlage verantwoordingsbrief”).

2008 Beleidsdoelen									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74						
Projecten↓				Sleuteldoelen					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

<sup>250</sup> See Part III for a thorough explanation of the methods as applied in this paragraph.

concentrated in Parts II (“an innovative, competitive and active economy,” goals 11 and 12), IV (“social coherence,” goal 36), and IV (“government responsiveness,” goals 73 and 74) of the cabinet policy program. None of the five goals he executed were so-called key cabinet goals. In 2009, the cabinet claimed that all five goals were on track (Accountability Report, TK 31951).

Furthermore, Ronald Plasterk shared responsibility with other cabinet ministers on goals 14 (on track), 33 (a key goal, on track), and 49 (a key goal, tracking information is missing). Other cabinet ministers carried first responsibility for these goals, but they needed Ronald Plasterk’s cooperation to accomplish them.<sup>251</sup>

The goals executed by state secretaries are 37 and 38 (both key cabinet goals, both on track), 39 (not on track, not a key goal), 40 (on track), and P-8, 41 and 42 (all three on track). These goals will not be studied in-depth, but will be taken into account when Ronald Plasterk’s goal realization is analyzed.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Accountability Report, TK 31951.

<sup>252</sup> This is a slightly different methodological approach than the one that was applied to the other cabinet ministers. The two state secretaries both had relatively important portfolios. Usually, cabinet ministers of education do not let state secretaries execute these key parts of the portfolio. The state secretaries Plasterk worked with, however, operated rather independently from the cabinet minister (source: in-depth interview with MR in July 2008 and October 2010). As described in Part III, the method originally does not include the extent to which state secretary goals are realized. In other words, in any other case, failures and successes of state secretaries would not affect the conclusion about the cabinet minister’s goal realization as defined in this book. However, there are three reasons to make an exception in this case. Plasterk’s goal realization should include the successes and failures concerning the state secretary goals, because:

- the majority of the cabinet minister’s goals were operated by state secretaries;
- the state secretary goals (Education) belonged to the core of the Ministry;
- relatively few goals were operated by Plasterk.

Consequently, when the state secretaries failed, Plasterk failed as Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science. Although the focus will be on the policy goals executed by Ronald Plasterk himself, the final verdict in the conclusion of this paragraph (based on the analysis and interpretation of the data) must include his successes and failures managing his entire portfolio, including the state secretary goals.



The goals and the extent to which Ronald Plasterk was on track in May 2009 will be discussed below in Table 27. Data sources for the analysis in this paragraph are the Accountability Report (written by the Cabinet), the Parliament's response to the report, the inner circle interviews, and possibly the response of the Court of Audit, in case they had explicit concerns about the cabinet minister's accomplishments.

Table 27

*Policy Goals of Ronald Plasterk, Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, 2007–2010.* Based on the Accountability Report of April/May 2009.

First Responsibility	First executive = State Secretary	Second Responsibility	Realization
11			Realized
12			Realized
		14	Realized
		33	Realized – Key goal
36			Realized
	37		Realized – Key goal
	38		Realized – Key goal
	39		<b>Not realized</b>
	40		Realized
		49	<b>Missing</b>

			<b>information –</b> Key goal
	P-8		Realized
	41		Realized
	42		Realized
73			Realized
74			Realized

**Policy Goals.** Ronald Plasterk’s policy goals were diverse, ranging from “a better quality higher education and fewer drop-outs” (goal 11) to “a new impulse to emancipation policies and policies for the emancipation of homosexuals” (goal 36) and “youth under eighteen becoming actively or passively familiar with culture, arts, and Dutch history” (goal 73). A few goals will be discussed below, in order to illustrate Plasterk’s policy portfolio.<sup>253</sup>

Most of Plasterk’s goals lacked concrete and statistically measurable indicators. According to the Cabinet, the number of drop-outs (goal 11) would decrease by means of an agreement between the cabinet minister and schools and universities. For Plasterk to be on track with goal 11 in 2009, the agreement was his main concern. The cabinet assumed that drop-out rates would go down when schools and universities adjusted their policies. The actual number of drop-outs was not mentioned in the Accountability Report. Plasterk enhanced the quality of higher education (another part of goal 11) the same way: by making an agreement with schools

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<sup>253</sup> Source: The Accountability Report, TK 31951.

and universities. The schools and universities worked with long-term indicators and goals. The cabinet promised that the results would be monitored in 2011, 2014, and 2017.<sup>254</sup>

Contrary to goal 11, the extent to which Plasterk was on track with goal number 12 (“enhancing the international image of scientific and academic institutions within the Netherlands”) at the time of the report depended on three statistically measurable indicators: the number of doctoral degrees, the number of female professors, and the Dutch citation rate (the international impact factor of Dutch scientists). In 2009, all indicators were met.

The cabinet minister’s accomplishments concerning goal number 36 (emancipation policies) were partly statistically measurable. Part of goal 36 was realized by Plasterk through Dutch municipalities. It was Plasterk’s job to convince Dutch municipalities to execute active gay emancipation policies. At the time the Accountability Report came out in May 2009, 28% of all Dutch municipalities were working on active gay emancipation policies.

The other goals within Plasterk’s executive policy portfolio both mainly required the cabinet minister to convince stakeholders and create consensus among politicians and professionals. For goal number 73 (“people younger than eighteen becoming actively or passively familiar with culture, arts, and Dutch history”) the cabinet minister made a list of concrete tasks:

- open up a new fund called Culture Participation;
- introduce the culture card to secondary education;
- start a program for increasing reading skills;
- make sure a board for the “National Historic Museum” is founded;

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<sup>254</sup> Plasterk’s term finished in 2010, before the results were known, and no information on drop-outs was found in the accountability report of 2011 written by the new cabinet Rutte I.

- make sure that the results (of a program called “Space and Culture,” 2005–2008) are published; and
- Start the annual Vermeer Award in order to award the most excellent Dutch artists.

Did these actions help in making Dutch youngsters more familiar with culture, art, and history?

The cabinet assumed so, and considered Plasterk on track because the indicators were met.

For goal number 74, Plasterk needed to take care of the design (in cooperation with stakeholders) and ratification (by the parliament) of the Media Act 2008. Additionally, Plasterk had come to an agreement with national public broadcasting organizations about their performance in 2008, 2009, and 2010. In 2008, Plasterk increased their budget by 50 million Euro. An expertise center for media skills was founded, and approximately 60 organizations joined this center. Plasterk came up with new plans for public libraries. The cabinet minister was on track according to the Accountability Report of the cabinet.

The five goals of Plasterk’s executive portfolio involved a lot of convincing, consensus seeking, and deliberation with stakeholders. He was chosen by the PVDA and asked to manage a portfolio that needed a spokesman who was ready to do a lot of “management by speech.” Plasterk was a public figure before he became a cabinet minister, due to his regular television appearances as a columnist. Below, the Parliament’s reaction to Plasterk’s part of the Accountability Report will show whether the Parliament agreed with the cabinet that his work was on track in May 2009.

**Accountability Day: Parliament’s Comments and Concerns.** On Accountability Day, several parliamentary parties made comments regarding Plasterk’s work. The SP started with a few critical remarks:

The Cabinet says it is on track with the quality of education, but there are new cuts coming up, while the Netherlands have been placed at the bottom of the international ranking that shows how much each country invests in education.<sup>255</sup>

The CDA noticed that the number of drop-outs had decreased in 2008 and complimented Plasterk on his work.<sup>256</sup> The VVD agreed with his focus: Stimulating a knowledge economy is key, and so is having high-quality higher education. However, according to the VVD, research institutions should collaborate more with private organizations in order to enhance innovation. A D66 spokesman stated that the Cabinet was not on track with the “economy of knowledge” goals. Goals on education and innovation were not sufficiently realized and D66 blamed Plasterk for the country’s diminishing position in the international rankings for educational quality. The party spokesman stated that the percentage that should have been spent on public research and development was 1%, but only 0.6% was invested in this goal. To make a stronger statement, D66 quoted the president of the Dutch Academy of Science: “Holland is the only EU state that has not increased its research budget compared to its economic development.”<sup>257</sup>

Another critical remark was made regarding Plasterk’s emancipation policies by the VVD: Positive discrimination of women often means negative discrimination against men. The PVDA (the party with which Ronald Plasterk is affiliated) complimented him about the way he

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<sup>255</sup> Accountability Debate, May 28 2009, TK 89. Original quote in Dutch from Agnes Kant, SP: “Het kabinet zegt dat het op koers ligt met het verhogen van de kwaliteit van het onderwijs, maar er komen nieuwe bezuinigingen, terwijl Nederland internationaal al jaren onderaan bungelt qua investeringen in onderwijs.” May 28, 2009, TK 89, Verantwoordingsdebat.

<sup>256</sup> Accountability Debate, May 28, 2009, TK 89. Original quote in Dutch from Van Geel, CDA: “Ook voor de participatie was 2008 een goed jaar, al zou je dat door de crisis bijna vergeten. De cijfers liegen er echter niet om. De werkloosheid onder allochtone jongeren nam fors af, er is minder schooluitval en er zijn meer mensen met een beperking aan de slag.” May 28, 2009, TK 89, Verantwoordingsdebat.

<sup>257</sup> Accountability Debate, May 28, 2009, TK 89.

stimulated innovation, but wanted him to provide more information on emancipation policies.

The party wondered what the problems were that people experienced when they worked 4 days a week. They asked the cabinet minister to help parents who wanted to work 4 days a week instead of 5. Then, an extended debate about emancipation followed, in which the political, ideological, and practical differences between parliamentary parties became apparent. Other than these relatively minor critical remarks, the Parliament was rather positive about Plasterk's work.<sup>258</sup>

However, some of the state secretary goals were not on track, and the Parliament noticed this: A D66 spokesman said: "Social ease? It's a dangerous stagnation. ... Daycare has a red signal on it. A knowledge economy has a red signal on it. All these themes concern the vulnerability of the economy and their signal is red on this Accountability Day."<sup>259</sup>

The Parliament accused Ronald Plasterk of three things:

- not spending the entire budget for research and development;
- not increasing the budget along with economic development; and
- not having his state secretary-executed goal concerning daycare on track.

#### **Interview Comments on Ronald Plasterk's Goal Realization and Handling Parliament.**

During one of the inner-circle interviews, a political assistant of one of the cabinet ministers described Plasterk's strengths and weaknesses as follows: "Plasterk is competent. He maintains a broad network and is good at bringing the main stakeholders together."<sup>260</sup> Another interviewee

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<sup>258</sup> Accountability Debate, May 28, 2009, TK 89, (In Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat").

<sup>259</sup> Accountability Debate, May 28, 2009, TK 89. Original quote in Dutch from Pechtold (D66): "Sociale rust? Het is gevaarlijke stilstand. Wij hebben het hier over Verantwoordingsdag: '200.000 werklozen' staat op rood; 'een sluitende kinderopvang' staat op rood; 'de kenniseconomie' staat op rood. Precies die zaken die te maken hebben met de kwetsbare economie staan in deze verantwoording op rood."

<sup>260</sup> Interview with JF, March 2009: Interviewer asks: "what do you think of Ronald Plasterk?" Interviewee answers in Dutch: "Doet het goed. Is ook erg aardig en slim. Maar zijn beleid is wel iets te onzichtbaar, inhoudelijk zijn het

characterized Plasterk as being the type of cabinet minister “citizens want in the short term.” According to the interviewee, who at the time of the interview worked as a communications advisor for an opposition party leader in Parliament, Plasterk is the type of cabinet minister who is liked because he is the opposite of boring. He has flair and people like that, “but he does not make any policies.”<sup>261</sup>

**Ronald Plasterk’s Policy Performance: Final Remarks.** In 2008, Ronald Plasterk reached all of his own sub-goals of the Accountability Report (published in 2009), but failed on a goal executed by one of his state secretaries (daycare). The Parliament considered this a major flaw of Ronald Plasterk’s goal realization, since daycare and childcare is a key element of a well-functioning labor market and economy. Based on information from the Accountability Report and the parliamentary discussion on Accountability Day in May 2009, it appears as though Plasterk had a few flaws in his goal realization. This was confirmed by two inner-circle experts. One said that the minister did “good work but his policies and policy results were not visible enough.”<sup>262</sup> The second interviewee was less convinced that Plasterk accomplished much at all in terms of the realization of policy goals. On the other hand, Plasterk used his outstanding media skills to realize some of his own policy goals. He was praised by one interviewee, who said that he was good at maintaining a broad network, bringing stakeholders together, and connecting different parties to work on one shared goal. Besides these positive interview comments, during

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altijd de stassen die met beleid komen. Hij is wel kundig, heeft een breed netwerk en kan partijen met elkaar verbinden.”

<sup>261</sup> Interview with FF on August 15, 2008 in The Hague. Original text in Dutch: Interviewer: “Wat willen burgers van een bewindspersoon?” Interviewee who works in the Parliament as a communications advisor: “Op de langere termijn willen burgers een bewindspersoon die simpelweg problemen oplost, die betrouwbaar en degelijk is. Saai mag ook. Maar op de korte termijn willen ze een minister die sexy is, zo iemand als Heinsbroek of Plasterk.” Interviewer asks: “Is Plasterk daarom zo populair?” Interviewee: “Ja. Maar beleid maakt hij niet. Hij bezoekt alleen recepties, doet Zomergasten, en leuke andere TV-dingetjes. Hij heeft zelfs een eigen blad.”

<sup>262</sup> JF, March 2009. Similar observations in interviews with FF, August 15, 2008 and interview with CW, January 14, 2009.

the parliamentary debate on Accountability Day in May 2009, it did not seem to be too worried about Plasterk's accomplishments. The Parliament did not blame him personally or question his competence during the debate.

**In Sum: Media Appearance and Operational Performance by Ronald Plasterk.**

Throughout his term, Ronald Plasterk was a very public cabinet minister. He was often on television, talking about education, culture, history, and (homo-) emancipation. He made an unconventional statement by attending the annual Gay Parade in Amsterdam. Plasterk's very own style differed from the style of most other cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. His way of approaching problems made him popular in some, but not all circles. The inner-circle expert opinions were strongly divided on the question of whether Plasterk's performance as a cabinet minister was good or bad.

The analyses in this chapter have shown that Plasterk's operational performance (including policy performance) was criticized, unlike that of the other HPC cabinet minister, Hirsch Ballin. Also, Plasterk's communicated personality profile did not show any of the patterns Hirsch Ballin communicated. Instead, he mainly showed dauntless and outgoing behavior, which generated the potential disadvantage of coming across as unconscientious and unreflective.

Furthermore, unlike Hirsch Ballin, Ronald Plasterk did not have a balanced style and skill profile. According to the style assessment respondents, he lacked skills on the rational style and connective style. Apparently, there are at least two ways in which cabinet ministers in the Netherlands gain public credibility: the way Hirsch Ballin did, and the way Plasterk did.

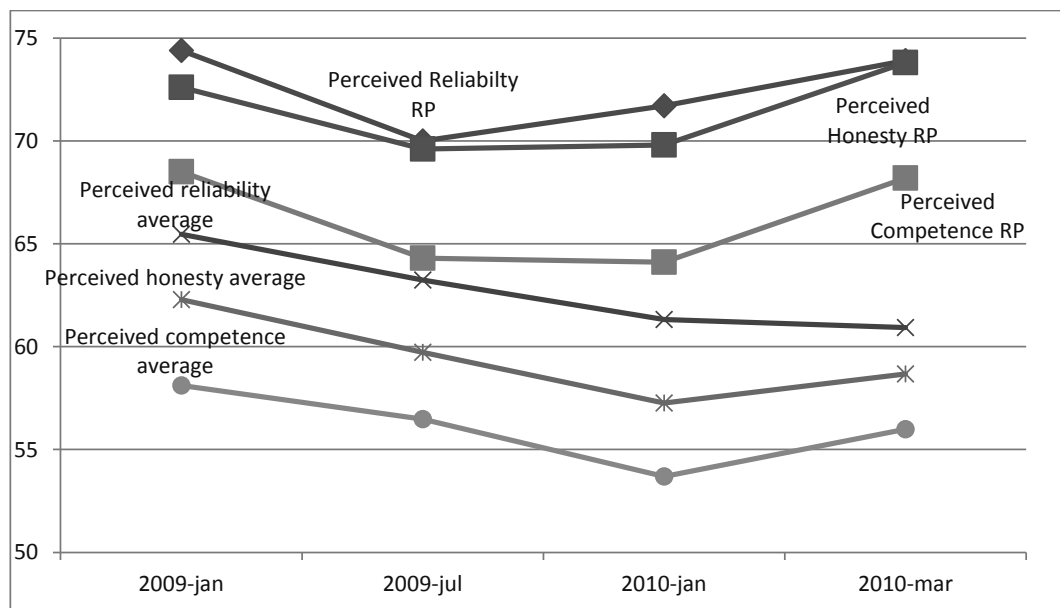


### **Summary of Part V: The Higher Public Credibility Cases**

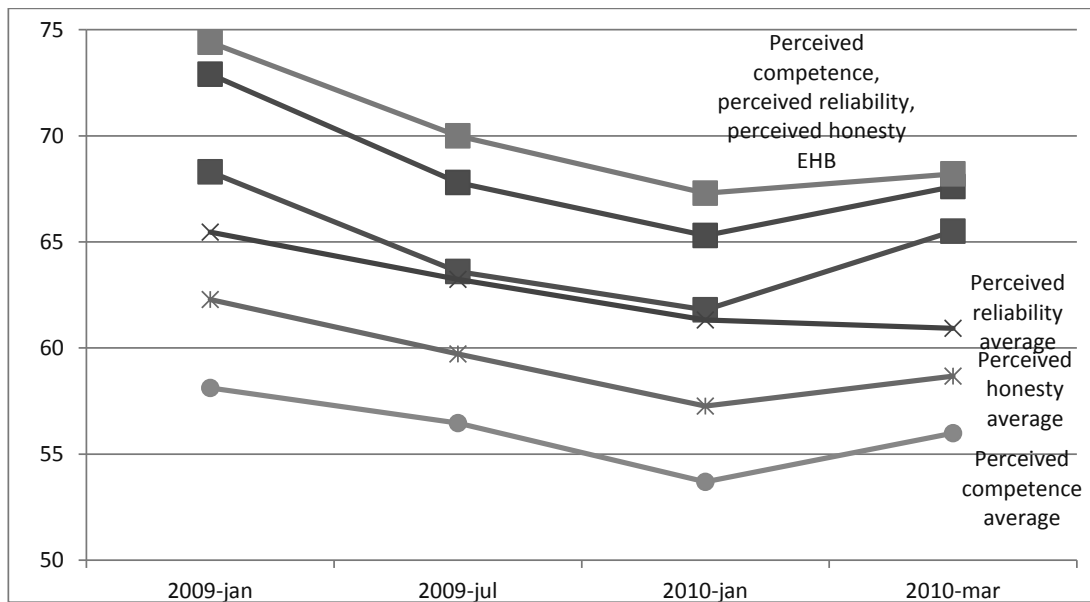
The discussed materials in Part V have suggested that there are at least two ways to become a higher-credibility cabinet minister in the Netherlands. Hirsch Ballin attained higher public credibility with a conscientious-dominant communicated personality profile, a balanced and highly developed style and skill profile, a positive image in the inner circle, and a flawless policy goal realization. Plasterk, on the other hand, attained higher public credibility with a dauntless-outgoing communicated personality profile, a style and skill profile with a lot of the public style, some of the political style, and almost none of the rational and connective styles, both positive and negative opinions in the inner circle, and a somewhat flawed policy goal realization.

Since the information citizens receive on cabinet ministers comes mostly from the media, one expects that the explanatory variable media appearance has a more direct influence on public credibility than the second explanatory variable (operational performance). After all, information on the performance of cabinet ministers is first filtered by the media. Determining whether performance information, which is information pertaining to the execution and accomplishments of the work done by cabinet ministers, has seeped through to regular citizens can be done by once again studying the three credibility variables. It seems that LISS panel respondents have indeed based their judgments on operational performance-related features of a cabinet minister, because it shines through the perceived reliability, honesty, and competence of cabinet ministers. After all, of the two HPC cabinet ministers, Plasterk is the one with the least perceived competence, while appearing competent is Hirsch Ballin's strongest asset. The fact that LISS panel respondents believed that Plasterk's weakest asset was his competence, while they believed that Hirsch Ballin's strongest asset was his competence, indicates that some information

on the operational performance of both cabinet ministers may have trickled down to the LISS panel respondents. After all, Hirsch Ballin had an inner circle that was unanimously positive about his performance, scored many points on all four styles/skill sets, and realized all of his policy goals. Plasterk, on the other hand, had a divided inner circle, only two developed styles/skill sets, and a slightly more flawed policy goal realization. This still does not prove a link between operational performance of cabinet ministers and their public credibility, since both Plasterk and Hirsch Ballin were at the top of the credibility ranking. However, it implies that citizens may be able to assess the operational performance of cabinet ministers with more precision than is generally assumed.



*Figure 23.* Public credibility of Ronald Plasterk in terms of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence in January and July 2009 and January and March 2010, compared to the average perceived reliability, honesty, and competence of all other ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet.



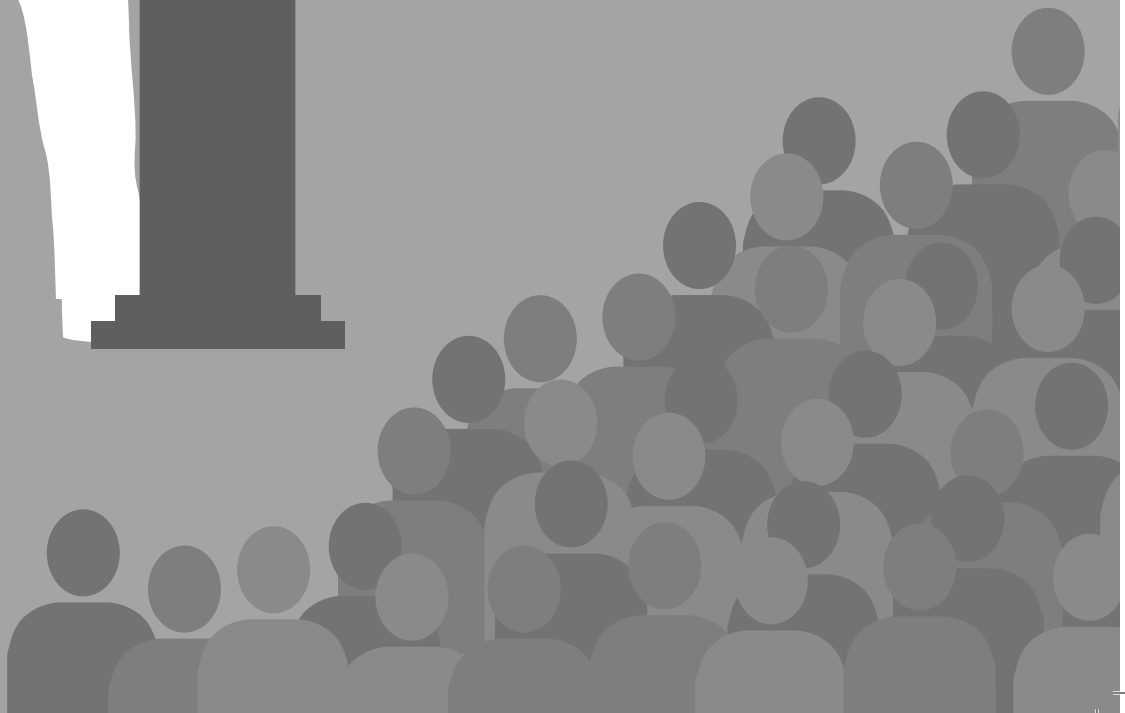
*Figure 24.* Public credibility of Ernst Hirsh Ballin in terms of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence in January and July 2009 and January and March 2010, compared to the average perceived reliability, honesty, and competence of all other ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet.

The hypothesis that citizens include an assessment of a cabinet minister's true performance into their credibility verdict (indicated by a flawless operational performance combined with a high perceived competence score by cabinet ministers, and a problematic operational performance combined with a low perceived competence score), requires further testing. Part VI shows how LPC and MPC cabinet ministers compare to the HPC cabinet ministers in terms of operational performance as well as media appearance.

# PART 6

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## Understanding Lower and Medium Public Credibility Case by Case





## **PART VI: UNDERSTANDING LOWER AND MEDIUM CREDIBILITY**

### **CASE BY CASE**

Part VI discusses several aspects of the work of the two previously selected MPC and LPC cabinet ministers Eimert van Middelkoop (Chapter 14), Jacqueline Cramer (Chapter 15), and Guusje ter Horst (Chapter 16). To determine whether their media appearance and/or their operational performance are linked to their problems attaining higher public credibility, their communicated personalities (media appearance), styles and skills, and goal realization (both pertaining to operational performance) will be analyzed.

Their communicated personality profile shows how they were presented in the media between 2008 and 2010. Their style and skill profile shows how people in the inner circle of the ministry have typified their ministerial styles and skills (the way they operated in the media, in the parliament, at the ministry, and with regards to their policy field). The last paragraph of each chapter completes the performance scan with a study of the extent to which each of the cabinet ministers has managed to realize policy goals in time and to Parliament's satisfaction. The methods and instruments have been discussed in Part IV.

## Chapter 14: Eimert van Middelkoop

Eimert van Middelkoop was the Cabinet Minister of Defense between 2007 and 2010. In this chapter, his communicated personality profile, style and skill profile, and the extent to which he realized his policy goals will be discussed in order to create a better understanding of his inability to attain higher credibility as a cabinet minister. Why did he end up at the tail of the credibility ranking, as discussed in Part II of this dissertation?

**Communicated Personality Profile—Eimert van Middelkoop.** In this paragraph, the MIDC will be applied to Van Middelkoop as a cabinet minister. The sources used to gather information about Van Middelkoop are mostly newspaper articles, some of which contain quotes by people who were interviewed by the journalist about the cabinet minister. Eimert van Middelkoop will be portrayed as a colleague, a boss, a politician, a cabinet minister, and a friend. Eventually, the communicated personality patterns of Van Middelkoop will be used to better understand his lower public credibility.

Eimert van Middelkoop can be considered a special case in this dissertation about the public credibility of cabinet ministers, not only because he was unable to attain higher or even medium levels of public credibility as described in Part II, but also because he was the only cabinet minister, aside from Vice Prime Minister Andre Rouvoet, who was affiliated with the CU, a political party on the conservative side of the political spectrum that had never previously joined a coalition.

At the start of the cabinet term in February 2007, a newspaper article carried the title “A Birthday Present for Van Middelkoop.”<sup>263</sup> This referred to his appointment as a cabinet minister, which reportedly made him very happy and proud. In the beginning of his term in 2007,

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<sup>263</sup> *Trouw*, De Verdieping, February 14, 2007: “Verjaardagskado voor Van Middelkoop.”

expectations were high and published reactions on Van Middelkoop's new status were friendly. However, in the summer of the first cabinet year (2007), the media began publishing more critical articles and began to express doubts about Van Middelkoop's performance: "The performance of Van Middelkoop raises questions. What to do with the Mission in Uruzgan, Afghanistan?"<sup>264</sup> An interview in February 2008 showed a reticent and strongly conscientious side of Van Middelkoop: "Afghanistan sharpens Defense Cabinet Minister Eimert van Middelkoop—I carry [the souls of] fallen warriors with me day and night."<sup>265</sup>

Then came the summer of 2008, during which Van Middelkoop's media performance became more problematic. The way journalists were covering his image began to become more critical. During an interview in 2008, Van Middelkoop reportedly said that he did not feel connected to the military culture of "hierarchy and authority." He also admitted that he would have been "deadly unhappy" in his early twenties if he had been forced to go on military duty, which did not happen because of his alleged importance for the political party he was working for. It was considered something that the Cabinet Minister of Defense, as the leader of an organization that, at the time, employed military workers in Afghanistan, should never have said. In September 2008, *De Telegraaf*, a popular newspaper, headlined the article "Words of Defense Cabinet Minister Lack Respect, Van Middelkoop Should Never Have Accepted the Job [of

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<sup>264</sup> *Trouw*, De Verdieping, July 11, 2007: "Van Middelkoop is toch geen Tita Tovenaar?" = "Van Middelkoop isn't a Magician, is he?." Summary: "Het optreden van defensie-minister Van Middelkoop roept vragen op. Hoe verder met de missie in Uruzgan?" = "The Performance of Van Middelkoop raises questions. What to do with the Mission in Uruzgan, Afghanistan?"

<sup>265</sup> *Algemeen Dagblad*, February 7, 2008: INTERVIEW Afghanistan zet defensie-minister Eimert van Middelkoop op scherp – 'Doden draag ik dag en nacht mee' = "Afghanistan sharpens Defense Cabinet Minister Eimert van Middelkoop—I carry fallen warriors with me day and night."



Cabinet Minister of Defense].”<sup>266</sup> According to many other journalists, Van Middelkoop’s words caused a major clash between the cabinet minister and his ministry. Van Middelkoop’s image did not seem to recover during the rest of his cabinet term. Journalists believed that this episode caused many defense employees and affiliates to believe that Van Middelkoop should not have been the Cabinet Minister of Defense in the fourth cabinet of Jan Peter Balkenende.

The image problems of Van Middelkoop continued after he was in office for approximately 18 months. The cabinet minister expressed that he was against the possibility of homosexual couples getting married. In September 2008, *The Financial Daily* (*Het Financieele Dagblad*) headed “New Slip of the Tongue for Eimert van Middelkoop,” with the subtitle “Eimert van Middelkoop Has Caused Trouble Again by Expressing His Opinion on Gay Marriage.”<sup>267</sup> Contrary to the expectations of some journalists at this point, who speculated that the cabinet minister would resign, Van Middelkoop remained seated until all cabinet ministers ended the cabinet term together in February 2010. But throughout his term, there were continuous signs of doubt among politicians and journalists about the quality of his performance (see more quotes in Appendix 22).

**Sources and the Process of Analysis.** To diagnose Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality patterns, 94 articles published between February 2008 and March 2010 were analyzed and labeled according to the MIDC method, as written by Immelman in his manual from 2004. The newspapers and opinion magazine articles were published during the 3 years

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<sup>266</sup> *De Telegraaf*, September 26, 2008 “Uitlating Defensie-minister ‘respectloos’; Van Middelkoop had baan nooit moeten accepteren” = “Words of Defense Cabinet Minister lack respect, Van Middelkoop should never have accepted the job.”

<sup>267</sup> September 25, 2008 “Opnieuw uitglijder van Eimert van Middelkoop,” “cabinet minister Eimert van Middelkoop (Defensie ) is weer in opspraak geraakt door uitlatingen in het opinieblad Vrij Nederland over het homowhuwelijk.”

after the start of the cabinet and before the last credibility measurement took place, which was just after the cabinet resigned in February 2010.<sup>268</sup>

The score sheet in Table 28 has been used to diagnose Van Middelkoop's communicated personality by means of the MIDC.

Table 28

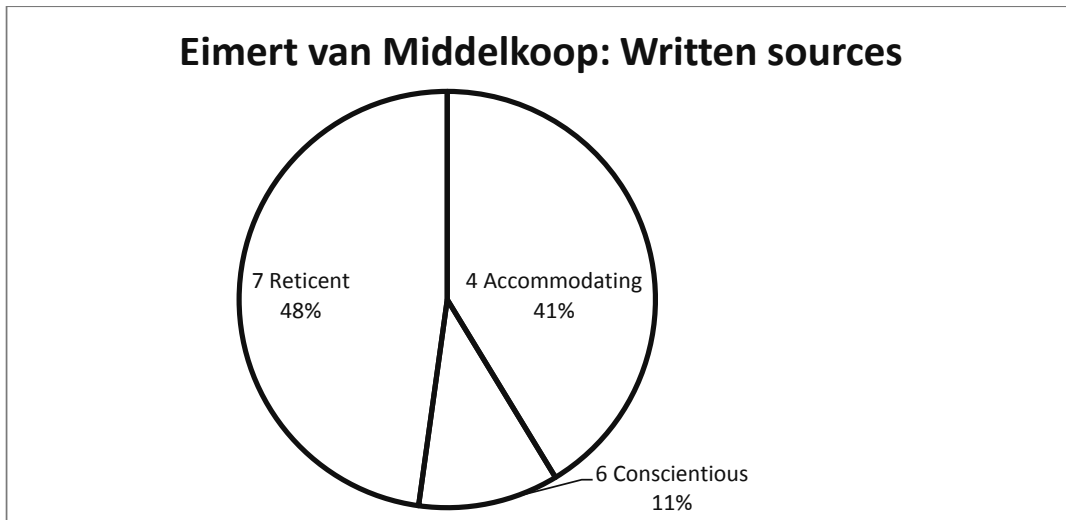
*MIDC Score Sheet Eimert van Middelkoop: Communicated Personality between January 2008 and March 2010. Written sources.*<sup>269</sup>

	Eimert van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense, 2007–2010								
	4 - Accommodating			6 - Conscientious			7 - Reticent		
Gradation points	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
A		2	3	1				2	3
B	1	2		1				2	
C	1	2					1	2	3
D		2			2		1	2	

<sup>268</sup> The four credibility measurements took place in January and July 2009 and January and March 2010. The LISS panel was asked to rate the cabinet ministers on a 4-point scale. The three credibility variables (characteristics of a good cabinet minister according to the LISS panel respondents) are: perceived reliability, perceived honesty, and perceived competence. Eimert van Middelkoop was among the lowest performers of the survey and is therefore considered a lower-credibility cabinet minister.

<sup>269</sup> How to read Table 28. The score sheet only shows the cells (attribute domains and scales/patterns) in which Eimert van Middelkoop's communicated personality is represented. Each of the 45 MIDC criteria represents a feature (characteristic) of the target person's (communicated) personality. For example, the second, top left criterion stands for "inept" and will be referred to as A4b: attribute A refers to the target person's expressive behavior, scale 4 is the accommodating pattern of the MIDC, gradation b is the second gradation. Consequently, Van Middelkoop's communicated personality receives 2 points for this criterion (Immelman, 2004). The bottom row shows the percentage of points Van Middelkoop's communicated personality receives on each scale (pattern). For example, on scale 4, the accommodating pattern, Van Middelkoop receives 19 raw points, which represents 41.3% of his communicated personality profile.

E	1	2	3	1			1	2	3
23 raw p.	19			5			22		
100 %	41.3			10.9			47.8		



*Figure 26.* MIDC pie chart of Eimert van Middelkoop's communicated personality between 2007 and 2010, based on written sources (press articles) and data from Table 28.

#### **Results of MIDC analysis: Eimert van Middelkoop's Communicated Personality**

**Patterns.** Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile as indicated by the source materials will be discussed below, based on the analysis by means of the MIDC (Immelman, 2004). Does Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile help to understand why he was a lower-credibility cabinet minister, a cabinet minister who was perceived as relatively unreliable and incompetent by the LISS panel respondents? A few answers can be given based on the score sheet in Table 28:

- Van Middelkoop showed patterns that may have caused people to believe he was reticent and circumspect, two generally unfavorable features of a human personality (scale 7: reticent, 47.8% of his profile).
- He showed overly accommodating behavior—for example, when apologizing for mistakes. This may not have made a strong impression and allowed for scapegoating in the media (scale 4: 41.3% of his profile).
- Both of the unfavorable patterns were exaggerated, as the results of the MIDC analysis show.<sup>270</sup> A statement discussed earlier in this dissertation (see Part IV) indicated that exaggerated patterns in a communicated personality profile may be a risk for a cabinet minister’s public credibility, as “standing out” may attract negative press coverage, especially when the cabinet minister is standing out from the others in a negative way, as Van Middelkoop did.

Van Middelkoop also communicated some of the conscientious pattern (scale 6). This is a pattern that was also communicated through the source materials by an HPC cabinet minister (Ernst Hirsch Ballin, see Part IV). Unfortunately, in Van Middelkoop’s case, this pattern was overshadowed by the reticent and accommodating patterns, which had a stronger presence in his communicated personality profile (11% for the conscientious pattern versus more than 40% for

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<sup>270</sup> When patterns are “strongly present within the target person’s personality profile” (between 15 and 24 raw MIDC points), this may “suggest maladaptively exaggerated features” (Immelman, 2004, p. 16). As discussed before, the MIDC results are interpreted differently in this book. The aim of this book is not to diagnose a person, but to diagnose an image; not to diagnose a personality, but to diagnose a communicated personality. Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality profile (his MIDC personality as communicated through Dutch newspapers and opinion magazines), consists of two highly present communicated personality patterns, that would “suggest maladaptively exaggerated features if present within his biographic personality.”

each of the other patterns). A selection of quotes from the source materials on Van Middelkoop's communicated conscientious personality pattern are discussed in Appendix 22.

**The Strength of Evidence and Range of Personality Types.** Table 29 shows an overview of Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile. Scale 7 (the reticent pattern) and scale 4 (the accommodating pattern) have the highest scores, and the source materials have provided quotes that refer to criteria from each one of the attribute domains (A–E).<sup>271</sup>

On scale 7, the reticent pattern, Van Middelkoop's communicated personality has 22 points, which means there would be "robust evidence for a Level III personality type; the basic personality type is prominent," if the justification of "identification at the third level (scored 3 points) in all five attribute domains" were to be met. This is not the case. Instead, there is identification at the second level in all five attribute domains. Consequently, Immelman's conclusion would be that there is "robust evidence for a Level II personality type; the basic personality type is prominent" (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). However, Immelman's text needs to be rewritten for the purpose of studying communicated personalities (by EW) instead of biographical personalities (by Immelman): there is robust evidence for a Level II communicated personality type; the basic communicated personality type is prominent within Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile.<sup>272</sup> This may be the first clue for understanding his low public credibility: Eimert van Middelkoop has communicated a great deal of a personality pattern that is generally perceived as a negative one.

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<sup>271</sup> As explained before, Immelman's attribute domain A represents expressive behavior, B represents interpersonal conduct, C represents cognitive style, D represents mood/temperament and E represents self-image (Immelman, 2004).

<sup>272</sup> See Part III for further explanation of the method and the instrument of the MIDC, and how exactly the method as applied in this book differs from the traditional MIDC by Immelman (2004).

On scale 4, the accommodating pattern, the cabinet minister's communicated personality has 19 points. On this scale, too, there is robust evidence for a Level II communicated personality type; this basic communicated personality type is prominent within Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). In this study, a prominent communicated personality type indicates that people who read newspaper articles about Van Middelkoop between 2008 and 2010 most likely learned that the cabinet minister was a relatively accommodating (cooperative and agreeable) cabinet minister. This may be the second clue for understanding why he was unable to attain more credibility: The accommodating-cooperative-agreeable pattern may have made Van Middelkoop look like a cabinet minister who lacked the stronger leadership patterns necessary for being successful in a highly political environment.

Last but not least, between 2007 and 2010, Van Middelkoop exhibited some conscientious characteristics (scale 6). For example, he was called dutiful (attribute domain A, expressive behavior), at times respectful (attribute domain B, interpersonal conduct) and often claimed to be reliable (attribute domain E, self-image). Although there was no evidence for Van Middelkoop communicating this pattern through his cognitive style (attribute domain C), the evidence for this communicated pattern will be included in the discussion below, as it showed up in many articles about him. The conscientious pattern is a small but present aspect of his communicated personality profile (see Table 29).

Table 29

*Overview of Van Middelkoop's Communicated Personality Profile*

Scale	Attributes	Points	Evidence	Level	Diagnose
Reticent	A, B, C, D, E	22	Robust	II	Prominent
Accommodating	A, B, C, D, E	19	Robust	II	Prominent
Conscientious	A, B, D, E	5	x	x	x

**Discussion of Van Middelkoop's Communicated Personality Profile.**<sup>273</sup> During the cabinet term, many Dutch newspaper articles contained references to Van Middelkoop as a cabinet minister with an accommodating (scale 4) and reticent (scale 7) personality. Most of Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile is almost equally divided in accommodating patterns (19 RAW points: 41.9% of his personality profile) and reticent patterns (22 RAW points, which is 47.8% of his profile).

**The Reticent Pattern.** The following quote illustrates Van Middelkoop's reticent communicated personality pattern:

[Van Middelkoop] didn't mind getting reprimanded by the Parliament. "That's a common ritual, you apologize, get some critics and then it's all right. As an ex-parliamentarian, he says he almost enjoyed it. The fact that his colleagues didn't back him up was disappointing, though. It's a shame [Prime Minister Jan Peter] Balkenende didn't call it just a slip of the tongue."<sup>274</sup>

<sup>273</sup> For an extended overview of the evidence from the source materials, see Appendix 22. Only a few of the quotes from the source materials will be included below to keep the text as compact as possible.

<sup>274</sup> *Vrij Nederland*, September 27, 2008: Title: Cabinet Minister of War: Eimert van Middelkoop. Original text: "Maar dat hij er in de Tweede Kamer stevig van langs kreeg, was helemaal niet zo erg. 'Dat is een gekend ritueel. Je biedt je excuses aan, je krijgt wat kritiek, en dan is het goed.' Als oud-volksvertegenwoordiger, zegt Van

(Anxious, A7c, apprehensive B7b, preoccupied C7a, distracted C7b, bewildered C7c uneasy D7a, anguished D7b, lonely E7a, alienated E7a and rejected E7a).<sup>275</sup>

Immelman (2004) explains that patterns can be present within the target person's personality in three different intensities. When it comes to the reticent pattern, "at the well-adjusted pole are watchful, private, socially reserved circumspect personalities" (Immelman, 2004, p. 48). Since Van Middelkoop showed this behavior to a higher degree, the audience may have seen a more exaggerated version of Van Middelkoop's communicated personality. Immelman (2004) continues: "Exaggerated reticent features occur in guarded, insecure, self-conscious, inhibited personalities" (p. 48). If this is the impression Van Middelkoop has made on people who read about him in the newspaper, it may explain some of his credibility problems. Immelman explains that there is one more level of intensity of the reticent pattern: "In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the reticent pattern displays itself in overanxious, mistrustful, reclusive, withdrawn behavior patterns" (2004, p. 48). Since Van Middelkoop has exhibited high levels of the reticent pattern in his communicated personality, it is possible that LISS panel respondents who read about him developed an opinion similar to the characteristics Immelman used to describe the most deeply ingrained version of the reticent pattern.<sup>276</sup>

People with a more inflexible form of the reticent pattern display "overanxious, mistrustful, reclusive, withdrawn behavior" (Immelman, 2004, p. 48). This may be the major

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Middelkoop, genoot hij er bijna van. Nee, het was een stuk vervelender dat hij van zijn collega's in de ministerraad zo weinig steun kreeg. 'Jammer dat Balkenende de kwestie op zijn persconferentie niet als een verspreking afdeed.'

<sup>275</sup> For more evidence, see Appendix 22.

<sup>276</sup> When interpreting the results, caution is required. The "diagnosis" applies to the communicated personality (personality as presented through the media) of Van Middelkoop. It does not necessarily apply to his real, biographic personality, because the available source materials do not offer enough stability for that type of conclusion. See also Part IV, for a discussion of the adjustments made to the method for the purpose of studying communicated personalities in this book.



pitfall of Van Middelkoop's public image. When he visited his military officers in Afghanistan, the journalist (of *Vrij Nederland*) described the cabinet minister during his appearance at the military base as being "uneasy" (attribute D7a). As a result, readers of the source materials have likely developed a picture of Van Middelkoop as an outsider, both in the military world and in the cabinet. This image of a cabinet minister who is "out of place" seemed to stick to Van Middelkoop's public persona: it was repeated over and over again in the press.

Eimert van Middelkoop himself may have caused this distance by telling a journalist (of the Dutch opinion magazine *Vrij Nederland*) that he would have been "deadly unhappy" if he had been required to serve on military duty. Although it was an honest admission, by admitting this he not only distanced himself from the military organization; he also distanced himself from the cabinet because his words caused credibility problems for the cabinet as much as for himself and his ministry.

The feelings of fear and concern about his work and his portfolio that Van Middelkoop admitted having refer to many criteria of scale 7, the reticent pattern. Some of the criteria that were recognized in the source materials are anxious (A7c), apprehensive (B7b), anguished (D7b), and lonely (D7a). A quote from Millon (1994a, p. 32) about the hesitating pattern (similar to the MIDC reticent pattern)<sup>277</sup> reveals part of the problem with Van Middelkoop's image:

Those scoring high on the Hesitating [Reticent] scale have a tendency to be sensitive to social indifference or rejection, to feel unsure of themselves .... Somewhat ill at ease and self-conscious, these individuals anticipate running into difficulties in interrelating and fear being embarrassed .... Most prefer to work alone or in small groups where they know

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<sup>277</sup> Immelman, 2004.

that people accept them. Once they feel accepted, they can open up, be friendly, be cooperative, and participate with others productively. (Millon, 1994a, p. 32)<sup>278</sup>

When studying communicated personalities, researchers cannot claim that the target person is, for example, “sensitive to social indifference or rejection.” Instead, researchers may claim that this is the impression the target person with a reticent communicated personality has most likely made on others. In other words, Millon’s quote cannot be used to understand who the target person is, but it can be used to understand the impression the target person (in this case, Eimert van Middelkoop) has made through the source materials. This is the difference between biographic personality patterns and communicated personality patterns: Both variables may be researched by means of the MIDC, but the interpretation and the outcome are different. The fact that Immelman (2004) and Millon (1996a) often describe the impression a certain personality type makes on other people, makes it easier to interpret the outcome of the MIDC analysis as communicated personalities as opposed to biographic personalities.

The problem for Van Middelkoop’s image was that, as the Cabinet’s term continued into its second and third year (2008 and 2009), he publicly appeared to be out of place in two circles that should have been his support systems: the Defense Ministry and the Cabinet. He was known to be unpopular among military officers, and in the press the image of the cabinet minister who was being reprimanded by fellow politicians kept being repeated.

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<sup>278</sup> Disclaimer: Although Immelman has indicated that his instrument can be used to research the biographical personalities of politicians, and to make an assessment of someone’s personality at a distance (without speaking with the target person), the quotes from Immelman (2004) and Millon (1994a) only apply to the way Van Middelkoop communicated himself, and was written about, in the source materials. They do not (necessarily) apply to his biographical personality, because, due to the type of source materials, only his communicated personality has been researched. The type of research carried out for this book does not justify any claims about the real, biographical character of any of the cabinet ministers. Therefore, the word *communicated* is always placed before the word *personality*.

When it comes to interpersonal conduct (attribute domain B), according to Millon (1996), reticent people “tend to distrust others’ motives in interpersonal relationships” (p. 263, see also Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40). This is the behavior Van Middelkoop, most likely unwillingly, broadcast several times in the source materials. For example, when the Prime Minister came up with a plan to temporarily relocate the Defense Ministry, Van Middelkoop talked openly about his feelings of “being sent to the playground.” He questioned the Prime Minister’s motives, when a newspaper described that Van Middelkoop speculated that his ministry was being relocated possibly because the Prime Minister wanted to limit his power. Thus did the argument turn into a public quarrel instead of a private discussion between the Defense Cabinet Minister and the Prime Minister.

Immelman (2004, p. 49) explains that the most extreme variant of a reticent cognitive style (attribute domain C) shines through when a target person seems to be “cognitively bewildered,” and seems to have difficulties making “accurate appraisals.” Indeed, several articles about Van Middelkoop implied that he was unable to make accurate appraisals, since he kept saying things about matters that were unripe for broadcasting. Van Middelkoop risked making a bewildered impression in the media when these so-called “slips of the tongue” occurred. He was often openly reprimanded by the Parliament and sometimes by the Prime Minister. This bewildered impression of Van Middelkoop may have harmed his image, and therefore his public credibility.

Within attribute domain C (cognitive style), all three criteria were identified: Van Middelkoop seemed preoccupied (C7a) with religion, which he mainly expressed when progressive topics such as gay marriage were discussed; he seemed distracted (C7b) when he made mistakes, and he openly admitted to have been “bewildered” (C7c) after he was not elected

for another term in Parliament earlier in his career. He even told the journalist that a psychologist had diagnosed him with post-traumatic stress disorder. Immelman's description of the mood and temperament (attribute domain D) of a typical reticent personality is as follows: "More exaggerated variants of the reticent pattern are anguished; they often seem distressed or agitated" (2004, p. 50, based on Millon, 1996, p. 265. See also Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40). Eimert van Middelkoop indeed expressed agitation and anger when topics such as "progressive politics" arose. Journalists also regularly referred to his sadness about fallen soldiers and other difficult aspects of his job.

In several cases there were references, either made by Van Middelkoop himself or by a journalist, to his respect for others; for instance, his respect for families of fallen soldiers. However, to the public appearing respectful does not seem to be accomplished by referring to "having respect" literally. Instead, it seems to be done by acting respectful (like Ernst Hirsch Ballin, one of the two HPC cabinet ministers) rather than telling the world about respect, like Van Middelkoop did. When it comes to creating an image of respect and sincerity, for a cabinet minister it seems to be important to be as subtle as possible, while at the same time showing respect in every action undertaken. This is why the references to Van Middelkoop are not identified on scale 6 (the conscientious-respectful pattern) but on scale 7 (the reticent-circumspect pattern). In case of Van Middelkoop, the image of an anguished, lonely cabinet minister is dominant.

When it comes to the last attribute domain, self-image (E), source materials about Van Middelkoop refer to all three of the criteria (gradation a, lonely; gradation b, alienated; and gradation c, rejected).<sup>279</sup> Loneliness applies to individuals who "recognize themselves as

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<sup>279</sup> For more evidence, read Appendix 22.

relatively friendless or isolated, yet desire social acceptance” (Immelman, 2004, p. 50; Millon, 1996, p. 263; see also Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40). This could be the impression Van Middelkoop made when he told the journalist that it was important for him to have contact with military soldiers and officers, because he wanted to “be one of them.” Such an impression may have also occurred when he lit a candle for General Van Uhm’s son in the church: Van Middelkoop went out of his way to create the impression that he was accepted by the military, but journalists kept writing that he did not fit in (he even made a Catholic gesture despite it being known that he was a determined follower of the Calvinist church). Alienation (criterion E7b) refers to being “alienated from the world” (Immelman, 2004, p. 50). According to Immelman (2004), these personalities “perceive themselves as socially inept, inadequate, and inferior, justifying thereby their isolation and sense of social alienation” (p. 50; see also Millon. 1996, p. 263; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40). Van Middelkoop made this impression on several occasions, once when he admitted to the Parliament that he was “dumb as an ox.”<sup>280</sup>

The references to Van Middelkoop’s excessive honesty in the source materials provide another<sup>281</sup> reason for believing that there is a link between media expressions and the LISS panel respondent’s judgments about cabinet ministers in term of reliability, honesty, and/or competence. After all, as discussed in Part II of this dissertation, Van Middelkoop’s perceived honesty was a lot higher than his perceived competence. LISS panel respondents may have

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<sup>280</sup> *Vrij Nederland*, September 27, 2008: Title: Minister of War: Eimert van Middelkoop. Original text: “Een storm brak los. Oh? vroegen Kamerleden zich af, had de regering dan al wél een besluit genomen? Van Middelkoop moest door het stof. ‘U bent ofwel buitengewoon geraffineerd, of oliedom,’ zei SP’er Harry van Bommel tegen hem. ‘Als ik tussen die twee moet kiezen,’ antwoordde Van Middelkoop, ‘dan kies ik voor de laatste.’”

<sup>281</sup> Another reason to believe that there is a link between media expressions and the LISS panel respondent’s judgments about cabinet ministers in term of reliability, honesty, and/or competence is the fact that Ronald Plasterk’s weakest point in his public credibility profile was perceived competence, in combination with the relatively high number of quotes from a variety of source materials in which doubts about his competence as a cabinet minister were expressed.

perceived Van Middelkoop as fairly honest because he was honest about his flaws, insecurities, and history. Since perceived honesty is one of the elements of higher credibility, being perceived as an honest cabinet minister is normally a good thing. However, Van Middelkoop may have come across as too honest, or honest when discretion was needed. Van Middelkoop's honesty was often referred to in combination with his tendency to say too much. It seems that excessive honesty may have led to lower public credibility in this case.

Altogether, Van Middelkoop expressed reticent characteristics too often and too easily in the written media. This may have caused the majority of his image problems, because stories like the ones Van Middelkoop helped create are great sustenance for the press and easily stick in the minds of newspaper readers. Many news followers have most likely heard at least one negative story of Van Middelkoop's lack of competence as a cabinet minister. When Van Middelkoop's words are put together like they were in Appendix 22, the reason he had the image of an incompetent cabinet minister seems to be clear. This may explain why his perceived competence was very low when measured by means of the LISS panel in 2009 and 2010.

**The accommodating pattern.** Next is a discussion of Van Middelkoop's other significant communicated personality pattern: the accommodating pattern (scale 4), as introduced in the following quotation: "Sustainable fumbling; blundering cabinet minister Eimert van Middelkoop is not credible. But his 'together-philosophy' fits too well with the cabinet to let him go"<sup>282</sup> (Inept, A4b). Similarly:

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<sup>282</sup> *Elsevier*, Oktober 4, 2008 Title: "Sustainable fumbling" Original title: "Duurzaam geklungel; Blunderende Eimert van Middelkoop is ongeloofwaardig bewindsman. Maar zijn 'samen'-filosofie past te goed bij het kabinet om hem te laten vallen."

Van Middelkoop had to bite the dust. “Either you are very roguish, or as dumb as an ox,” said SP politician Harry van Bommel. “If I have to choose one of those, I’ll take the latter,” was Van Middelkoop’s answer.<sup>283</sup>

(Dependent, A4c, inept, A4b, conciliatory, B4a,<sup>284</sup> submissive B4b, naïve C4b, docile D4b, considerate E4a, inadequate E4b and inept E4c)

Scale 4, the accommodating pattern on which Van Middelkoop has 19 points, refers to individuals who are accommodating, cooperative, and/or agreeable. Van Middelkoop was presented through the source materials as being a highly accommodating personality type, which may have caused LISS panel respondents to believe that he leaned heavily on other ministers in the cabinet. He may have been seen as “incompetent” when other politicians reprimanded him in public, and as “submissive” when he publicly apologized for his mistakes.

Throughout his term as a cabinet minister, Van Middelkoop communicated a slightly exaggerated version of the accommodating pattern. Besides exhibiting mild characteristics such as “devoted, conciliatory [and] cooperative,” sometimes Van Middelkoop came across as “unassertive, compliant [and] agreeable” (Immelman, 2004, p. 34). People with a more inflexible form of the accommodating pattern are considered “dependent, [and] incompetent.” They often show “submissive behavior” (Immelman, 2004, p. 34). It can be assumed that these characteristics do not help a cabinet minister to develop a higher credibility image.

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<sup>283</sup> *Vrij Nederland*, September 27, 2008: Title: Cabinet Minister of War: Eimert van Middelkoop. Original text: “Een storm brak los. Oh? vroegen Kamerleden zich af, had de regering dan al wél een besluit genomen? Van Middelkoop moest door het stof. ‘U bent ofwel buitengewoon geraffineerd, of oliedom,’ zei SP’er Harry van Bommel tegen hem. ‘Als ik tussen die twee moet kiezen,’ antwoordde Van Middelkoop, ‘dan kies ik voor de laatste.’”

<sup>284</sup> Identified 10 times.

Strack (1997) draws the following picture of a typical accommodating person, which applies to the normal (cooperative) prototype of the accommodating pattern (Immelman, 2004, p. 35):<sup>285</sup> “They may appear even-tempered, docile, obliging, self-effacing, ingratiating, or naive” (p. 489).

If this is the image Van Middelkoop communicated, it does not seem surprising that he had trouble attaining public credibility. This, and the fact that “posture, voice, and mannerisms may convey a lack of self-confidence,” (Millon, 1996, pp. 331–332; Immelman, 2004, p. 36) may explain part of Van Middelkoop’s low perceived competence (and possibly his perceived reliability). Millon (1996) continues by stating that “all variants of the accommodating pattern are to some degree wistful and sentimental by nature and prone to being excessively conciliatory and self-sacrificing” (pp. 331–332).

Van Middelkoop told journalists about his heartfelt pain when soldiers fell in Afghanistan and that “he carried fallen warriors with him day and night.” However compassionate, the cabinet minister implied that he was unsure about the “need” for these deaths and the mission in Afghanistan altogether. Millon explains this tendency when he states that people with “more exaggerated variants of this pattern tend to ... express self-doubt [and] communicate a need for assurance” (Millon, 1996, p. 332); see also Immelman, 2004, p. 36).

Millon’s description of the most exaggerated variants of the agreeing pattern may explain how LISS panel respondents with progressive values who have no interest in religion have assessed Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality. After all, leaders who communicate the agreeing pattern “often believe that they are inept and lacking in talent and skill, leading them to conclude—often erroneously—that it is best to place their fate in others’ hands, thereby

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<sup>285</sup> Immelman, 2004, p. 35: “based on Millon’s theory, empirical findings from studies correlating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument.”



effectively abdicating personal responsibility” (Millon, 1996, p. 332). Many times Van Middelkoop talked about his need for guidance from God in order to be able to do a good job. More segregated groups of LISS panel respondents may have judged Van Middelkoop as inadequate and inept in his need and utilization of the guidance of his religion when making (political) decisions. Van Middelkoop openly admitted that he did not understand how people without a faith create structure in their lives. Large groups of respondents do not share this religious belief system, and only a minority of citizens voted for the CU, which may be one of the reasons why Van Middelkoop was unable to attain higher public credibility.

When it comes to attribute domain D (mood/temperament), the descriptions of Millon fit the way journalists wrote about Van Middelkoop in the source materials as well. According to Millon, “‘Agreeing’ individuals ‘avoid tension and interpersonal conflict’” (1996, p. 334). This is what some observers of Van Middelkoop have noticed. It seemed unlikely that Van Middelkoop would [symbolically] put his foot down, slam his hand on the table, or raise his voice. In one interview Van Middelkoop said it himself: instead of being harsh, he would rather say “I would have done that differently.”<sup>286</sup>

However, there is a strange combination of accommodating behavior and the behavior also described in the media that indicates more dominant characteristics in Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality. In some of the articles, he came across as somewhat verbally aggressive. This was shown by a journalist who interviewed him thoroughly. The article revealed

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<sup>286</sup> Refers to A4b, B4a and B4b: *Vrij Nederland*, September 27, 2008: Title: Cabinet Minister of War: Eimert van Middelkoop. Original text in Dutch: “Hij houdt ook van anekdotes. En van grapjes. De volgende dag, bij terugkomst op vliegveld Rotterdam wijst hij op een alleenstaande tas en roept: ‘Pas op jongens, een terroristische aanslag.’ Maar één ding is Eimert van Middelkoop niet: een man van de confrontatie. Met de vuist op tafel slaan doet hij zelden. Dat geeft hij bij onze eerste ontmoeting meteen toe. ‘Het woord gezag zit niet echt in mijn vocabulaire,’ zegt hij op het terras in Bratislava. ‘Als ik ergens ontevreden over ben, zeg ik eerder: “Dat had ik liever anders gewild.”’

that Van Middelkoop's temper could heat up when it came to policies he strongly rejected based on his religious beliefs: gay marriage and especially "progressive politics." The same article showed that Van Middelkoop would sometimes get so involved with his own story that he somewhat rudely ignored a person who tried to interrupt him.

In a few other articles, there was reference made to Van Middelkoop's harsh and dominant behavior, which may counter the presence of a strongly accommodating pattern (Immelman, 2004). However, counter-indications do not always disqualify a certain personality pattern: according to Millon (1996), personalities are not always what they look like. Millon has explained that an agreeing (accommodating) pattern can coexist with other, more hidden patterns in a (communicated) personality profile.

Many of the criteria of the accommodating (scale 4) pattern were recognized, which indicates that Van Middelkoop communicated a personality similar to the way it was described above by Millon (1996) and Immelman (2004): a personality with a strong component of accommodating-cooperative-agreeing patterns. This, together with a lack of the stronger leadership patterns such as the dominant, ambitious, and outgoing patterns, may explain a great deal of Van Middelkoop's image problems.

**The Conscientious Pattern.** Next is a discussion of Van Middelkoop's third and last communicated personality pattern: the conscientious pattern (scale 6). Van Middelkoop's communicated personality has 5 MIDC points on scale 6, the conscientious-respectful-dutiful pattern, which is 10.9% of his communicated personality profile.

Every Sunday morning, the Dutch military community has a chaplain service. It is a moment of reflection, introspection. Everyone is welcome, being together has an ecumenical character. (...) At one point during the service, General Van Uhm is having a

hard time. This song was played at the funeral of his son Dennis, four months ago. Eimert van Middelkoop notices it. And then he does something remarkable: he stands up and lights a candle. No consistent practice for a neo-Calvinist. But he does this for the general, he says afterwards. “It was the first time in my life.”<sup>287</sup>

(Dutiful, A6b, respectful, B6a, solemn, mood: D6b, reliable, self-image: E6a)

According to Immelman (2004, p. 44), conscientious individuals are “often religious” and they put a lot of effort into “maintaining their integrity.” Millon states that they “[voice] moral values,” which “gives them a deep sense of satisfaction.” They tend to “[see] complex matters in black and white, good and bad, or right or wrong terms” (1996, p. 519). This is similar to the image Van Middelkoop communicated through the source materials, since he was obviously religious and was often quoted speaking in terms of right and wrong (see the evidence from the source materials in Appendix 22). Strack’s (1997) “respectful prototype,” which, according to Immelman (2004), corresponds to the conscientious pattern, shows that “these individuals can be rule abiding to a fault ..., and may be perfectionistic, inflexible, and judgmental” (PACL, 1991). A potential success of Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality profile may rely on Strack’s (1997) respectful prototype, since it shows that “among co-workers and friends, respectful [conscientious] personalities are best known for being well organized, reliable, and diligent. They have a strong sense of duty and loyalty, are cooperative in group efforts, show persistence even in difficult circumstances” (Strack, 1997).

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<sup>287</sup> Also refers to B6a: *Vrij Nederland*, September 27, 2008: Title: Cabinet Minister of War: Eimert van Middelkoop. Original text: “Iedere zondagochtend houdt de Nederlandse aalmoezenier hier een dienst voor de Nederlandse militairen. Het is een moment van bezinning, van introspectie. Iedereen is welkom: het samenzijn heeft een nadrukkelijk oecumenisch karakter. (...) Op dat moment krijgt generaal Van Uhm het moeilijk. Dit nummer werd gespeeld op de begrafenis van zijn zoon Dennis, vier maanden geleden. Eimert van Middelkoop ziet het. En dan doet hij iets opmerkelijks: hij staat op en brandt een kaarsje. Geen vaste gewoonte voor een vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde. Maar hij doet het voor de generaal, vertelt hij naderhand. ‘Het was de eerste keer in mijn leven.’”

As discussed in Part V, this personality type was strongly present within the communicated personality of one of the HPC cabinet ministers: Ernst Hirsch Ballin. This offered reasons to assume that the conscientious pattern can lead to higher credibility. Why did it not give Van Middelkoop an opportunity to attain higher credibility? Eimert van Middelkoop only communicated a small percentage (10.9%) of the conscientious pattern, and his two other communicated personality patterns have not been associated with higher-credibility in cabinet ministers or great leadership (see Immelman [2004]).

Immelman (2004, p. 45) explains which type of expressive behavior is typically found in conscientious individuals as follows:

The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Conscientious individuals a sense of duty; they do their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, follow regulations closely, and are typically responsible, reliable, proper, prudent, punctual, self-disciplined, well organized, and restrained.

Someone with the conscientious pattern as described above by Immelman will most likely make a reliable impression on others. A truly conscientious individual is someone others can rely on and someone who is fair-minded, with a strong moral compass. If Van Middelkoop had been able to communicate more of this pattern through the media, it would most likely have shaped his image differently, in a more positive way. Additionally, there may have been a better chance of his building a higher-credibility image, as it seems to have worked well for Hirsch Ballin (in combination with other reasons discussed in Part V, such as having no exaggerated patterns in his communicated personality profile, and having a balance between the dominant pattern and the conscientious pattern). Also, the conscientious elements in his communicated personality profile may explain why Van Middelkoop did not lose all of his credibility, and

possibly why he was able to finish his term with the other cabinet ministers in March 2010. That it could have ended sooner was demonstrated by the case of Ella Vogelaar, Cabinet Minister of Living, Neighborhoods, and Integration. She lost all of her credibility in the first year of the cabinet term and consequently resigned much earlier than did the other cabinet ministers, reportedly because the leaders of her party (PvdA) did not believe that she had accomplished sufficient results.<sup>288</sup>

### **Eimert van Middelkoop: A Reticent-Accommodating-Conscientious Appearance.**

Van Middelkoop's communicated personality was investigated for this dissertation because studying the communicated personalities of selected cabinet ministers may help to understand their public credibility (a combination of reliability, honesty, and competence as perceived by LISS panel respondents in 2009 and 2010). In Van Middelkoop's case, his communicated personality may help to understand why his public credibility was relatively low. Aside from the elaborate criticism addressing Van Middelkoop as a cabinet minister, the source materials have revealed something else: patterns of a communicated personality profile.

Throughout the source materials, Van Middelkoop revealed too much information about himself and his shortcomings, doubts, and troubles. He told a few journalists about the pain and struggles he endured in his life. It would have been better if he had kept this information to himself. He should not have confided in the public by saying that he would have become 'deathly unhappy' on military duty, nor that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after leaving the Parliament at the end of his career.<sup>289</sup> These confessions revealed a reticent

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<sup>288</sup> *Elsevier*, November 13, 2008. Original title in Dutch: PvdA-top grijpt in; Ella Vogelaar treedt af. "PvdA-fractieleader Mariëtte Hamer heeft het vertrouwen in mij opgezegd omdat ik op mijn beleidsterreinen onvoldoende resultaten heb behaald," zei de minister. "Ik herken me niet in die kritiek."

<sup>289</sup> Before he became a cabinet minister. See Appendix 22.

communicated personality pattern, a pattern associated with people who are, for example, apprehensive (B7b), anguished (D7b), and lonely (D7a).

Van Middelkoop's "excessive honesty" caused his most present communicated personality patterns to be the reticent and accommodating patterns. He communicated too much of scales 4 and 7, without communicating stronger leadership patterns such as dominance (scale 1A) and ambition (scale 2). Van Middelkoop combined scale 4 and 7 with another pattern on the softer side of the MIDC: scale 6, the conscientious pattern. This pattern has been associated with higher public credibility (in the case of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Cabinet Minister of Justice), but its presence was not strong enough in Van Middelkoop's communicated personality profile. The conscientious pattern was overshadowed by reticent and accommodating behavior. Communicating a stronger conscientious pattern and downplaying the reticent and accommodating patterns would have been Van Middelkoop's best strategy for increasing his public credibility (see also De Vries & De Landtsheer, 2009, on conscientious MIDC patterns in successful Dutch cabinet ministers).

**Ministerial Style and Skill Profile—Eimert van Middelkoop.** In short, the style assessment was designed for this dissertation in order to measure the style and skill profile of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands in 2008, 2009, and 2010.<sup>290</sup> It was based on four areas of work cabinet ministers generally operate in: politics, the policy field(s), the media, and the ministry. Operating in each of these four broad areas of work requires various sets of operational skills cabinet ministers apply in practice. Furthermore, each style comes with a certain focus: a focus on the Parliament and politicians, stakeholders and professionals in the policy fields, journalists, and policy advisors at the ministries. Each style also comes with a set of potential

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<sup>290</sup> See Part IV for a methodological discussion of the style assessment.

strengths and weaknesses. The four styles are the political style, the connective style, the public style, and the rational style.

The “style assessment” is an instrument that reveals in which style or area of work the cabinet minister excels, according to those in the inner circle of the cabinet minister. It consists of a questionnaire with 16 statements (four for each style). The term “assessment” refers to the fact that the inner-circle experts “assess” the styles and skills of their cabinet minister.

At the time of the interview regarding Eimert van Middelkoop, the main interviewee who commented on his styles and skills had worked for (and with) the cabinet minister for 3 years. He was one of the cabinet minister’s communications and political advisors, and he worked with the cabinet minister on a weekly, sometimes daily basis during the term of the Balkenende IV cabinet between 2007 and 2010. At the time of the interview regarding Van Middelkoop (December 2011), the interviewee (GK) who filled out the style assessment questionnaire for Van Middelkoop did not work directly for the cabinet minister any longer, since the cabinet had resigned in February 2010.

An in-depth interview took place after filling out the style assessment questionnaire.<sup>291</sup> The interview took approximately one hour. The interviewee’s opinion about his political boss was neutral to positive. There were no signs of either personal resentment or abnormal adoration. The interviewee seemed comfortable speaking about Van Middelkoop’s strengths as well as his weaknesses as a cabinet minister, a few of which he pointed out frankly, yet respectfully. The in-depth interview comments will be discussed in paragraph three of this chapter (“inner-circle opinions”). This paragraph will show how Van Middelkoop’s style and skill profile will help to

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<sup>291</sup> With KG; interview date: December 16, 2011.

understand how cabinet ministers gain public credibility when compared to the style and skill profiles of other cabinet ministers.

Table 30 shows a summary of Van Middelkoop's style and skill profile and the number of points the interviewee has given him on each style. The data are displayed in a spider diagram in Figure 27, which shows Van Middelkoop's styles and skills at a glance.

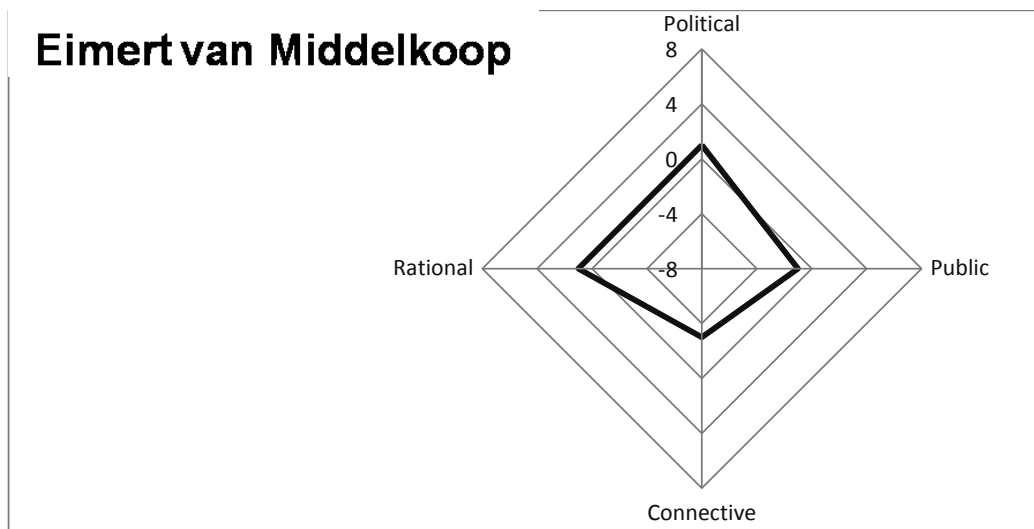
Table 30

*Style and Skill Profile of Eimert van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense, 2007–2010 Interview*

Date: December 2011. Interviewee: KG.

Styles and skills of Eimert van Middelkoop				
Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+2	0	0	+2
Yes	+1	+2	+1	+1
No	-2	-1	-2	0
Certainly no	0	-2	-2	-2
Sum	+1	-1	-3	+1





*Figure 27.* Style and skill profile of Eimert van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 30 (interviewee: KG).

Eimert van Middelkoop’s style & skill profile is relatively balanced, and his spider web is small. His connective style and public style are underdeveloped. His rational style (policy making) and political style are slightly more developed. Each style and the extent to which it matches the way he operated during his term will be discussed below.

One of the stronger assets of the minister’s style and skill profile is the rational style: according to the interviewee, Van Middelkoop had detailed portfolio knowledge about the pertinent topics at the Ministry of Defense. According to KG, he knew all the details of his policy field and was an expert policy maker. Covering the topic in the Parliament for years (as a Parliamentarian and member of the CU) seemed to make him feel comfortable with the policy field and the military laws.

At the same time, KG explained that Defense was not the perfect ministry for Van Middelkoop, as the cabinet minister would have done a better job at a “law department,” such as Justice. “Defense is a military organization. (...) Every Cabinet Minister of Defense goes

through a difficult time, because normal people don't think like military people. You are bound to make mistakes, unless you're one of them."<sup>292</sup> Despite the cultural differences between Van Middelkoop and the military organization, he was able to rely on previously gathered knowledge and experience to accomplish his policy goals. Besides portfolio knowledge, the rational style has another aspect: rationality, as opposed to emotions and intuition as bases for decision making. KG explained that Van Middelkoop did not solely rely on rationality in his decisions: "he would always weigh arguments rationally, but in politics, you can't make decisions without intuition."<sup>293</sup>

The second positive style in Van Middelkoop's style profile is the political style & skill set. According to KG, Van Middelkoop was a typical politician, which shone through in his style and skill profile: Van Middelkoop was often convinced he was in the right and KG thought that the minister was particularly competitive. His political experience and political style were developed during the many years he was a parliamentarian. But Van Middelkoop's political style was not more developed than that of other selected cabinet ministers. He only had one point on average on the political style, because KG did not recognize all four of the statements during the style assessment. Van Middelkoop did not have much power in the cabinet beyond his own policy portfolio (contrary to HPC cabinet ministers Hirsch Ballin and Plasterk). However, KG believed that other cabinet members took Van Middelkoop seriously, and that they would listen to him, but mainly when it came to his own portfolio, on Defense topics.

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<sup>292</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: "Defensie is een militaire organisatie. Je moet er zijn. Elke minister van defensie heet het moeilijk in deze wereld, want gewone mensen (niet-militairen) denken niet als militair. Je maakt fouten als politicus op Defensie, tenzij je zelf militair bent."

<sup>293</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: [beslissingen waren] "wel altijd beargumenteerd, maar je kunt in de politiek niet zonder intuïtie."

KG explained that Van Middelkoop started off with a few flaws in his performance as a cabinet minister addressing Parliament:

He was a parliamentarian Pur Sang. He didn't adjust to the role [of being a cabinet minister]. He maintained a political debating style, couldn't let go of the opposition position. He loved a debate, but as a cabinet minister you have to change. (...) He visibly improved throughout his term, but the image of a playful, giddy man appeared to be difficult to get rid of [once he became a more settled cabinet minister].<sup>294</sup>

Van Middelkoop's (slightly) underdeveloped styles are the public style (-1) and the connective style (-3). KG gave Van Middelkoop some points on the public style because sometimes the cabinet minister performed well on television. This implies that Van Middelkoop did not always have a smooth television performance (this was confirmed in the previous paragraph about his communicated personality profile based on a media analysis). Furthermore, the cabinet minister paid attention to building a positive image because he understood the importance of it, as KG stated. Despite the fact that KG liked and respected the former cabinet minister a great deal, KG admitted that Van Middelkoop did not succeed in drawing media attention to positive accomplishments and that the cabinet minister's overall media performance was not great. KG declared that "the reason for his bad media performance is based on one article in *Vrij Nederland*." This article was the outcome of a series of interviews by a journalist who followed Van Middelkoop for a few months during his term. The final interview took place

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<sup>294</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: "Het ging in het begin helemaal fout. Hij was een parlementarier pur sang. Hij nam zijn rol niet goed. Hij had de debatstijl van een debatterende politicus, liet de oppositie rol niet goed los. Hij hield van het debat, maar als cabinet minister moet je je anders opstellen. Ik heb hem daar enorm in gecoached, en hij is er wel in gegroeid. Maar als je eenmaal dat beeld hebt gewekt, van een speelse, jolige brabbelende man, dan kom je daar in de Tweede Kamer moeilijk meer van af."

in Van Middelkoop's back yard in the summer of 2008. This was the interview discussed in the previous paragraph about his feelings regarding military duty when he was younger.<sup>295</sup>

According to KG, one bad interview does not mean that Van Middelkoop was generally unable to address the media:

He received lots of positive feedback from many angles, [and] other cabinet ministers always listened to him. Media [messages] are always blown out of proportion. This newspaper tried to destroy Van Middelkoop's image and end his career, because their competitor had ended Vogelaar's career. Parliament members want to be quoted in the newspapers, but when it gets complicated, the public tunes out.<sup>296</sup>

According to interviewee KG, the fact that newspaper journalists kept repeating media blunders time and time again (possibly, as KG suspects, to force a cabinet minister to quit as a way to demonstrate their power), combined with the inability of the public to fully perceive complicated matters, are to blame for Van Middelkoop's negative public image. If KG is right, these mechanisms, in combination with one unfortunate mistake Van Middelkoop made during the interview in 2008 in his own back yard, may have caused the minister's public credibility problems. The authors of the opinion magazine put a spotlight on Van Middelkoop's clumsiness, but that is what journalists do. It is their job to provide the information they find during interviews. According to KG, however, Van Middelkoop's clumsiness was completely incidental. He claimed that journalists of *Vrij Nederland* had made a fairly competent cabinet

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<sup>295</sup> Instead of letting him join the army, the political party he was working for gave him an official note in which they declared that Van Middelkoop was irreplaceable and of great importance to the organization. At the time, this exempted him from military duty.

<sup>296</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: "De reden voor zijn slechte media optreden is gebaseerd op het Vrij Nederland artikel, maar overal krijgt hij veel waardering. In het kabinet luisterde altijd naar hem. Media wordt opgeblazen tot enorme proporties, kamer wil krant halen, als het echt moeilijk wordt dan haakt de kijker af."

minister appear strongly incompetent. According to KG, Van Middelkoop should be admired for his strengths as a politician, a cabinet minister, and a person, because no matter how weak his public image was, he managed to continue doing his job, and do it well, until the end of the cabinet term.

However, from a style and skill profile perspective, the connective style, with -3 points in Table 30, seems to be Van Middelkoop's real shortcoming as a cabinet minister. Interviewee KG only recognized one out of four statements of the connective style in Van Middelkoop's style and skill profile: the Cabinet Minister of Defense "somewhat" valued meetings with stakeholders.<sup>297</sup> The statements that did not apply to Van Middelkoop's style profile according to KG were:

- For the cabinet minister, a lack of support among stakeholders can be a deal breaker ("no, not at all").
- The minister is often willing to reach for a compromise ("no, not really").
- The minister often manages to build consensus ("no, not really").

Part V has shown that the higher credibility cabinet minister who also lacked points on the connective style, Ronald Plasterk, compensated with a very strong public style. Van Middelkoop did not compensate with a strong public style. Instead, his media appearance was problematic.

On the first statement listed above, KG explained that Van Middelkoop was under the impression that stakeholders have no idea what is happening in society. That explains why a lack of support among stakeholders would not keep Eimert van Middelkoop from making a decision against stakeholder advice "at all." The answer to the second statement seems to be rooted in Van Middelkoop's political style: He was convinced he was in the right (a statement on the political

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<sup>297</sup> On this statement, KG chose answer number 2 out of 4: "yes, somewhat."

style confirmed by KG). Someone who is strongly convinced he or she is in the right will likely be unwilling to reach for a compromise. This indicates that the “thinking in black and white, good and bad, or right or wrong terms” (Millon, 1996, p. 519), as discussed in the previous paragraph about Van Middelkoop’s communicated personality, may be rooted in his style and skill profile as well. Where Hirsch Ballin was known for being flexible and inclusive, Van Middelkoop came across in both the inner and outer circles as inflexible and unwilling to reach for compromises. The style and skill profile of Van Middelkoop as featured between 2007 and 2010 may be similar to the impression Hirsch Ballin made as a stern, inflexible Cabinet Minister of Justice between 1989 and 1994, as discussed in Part IV. The following quote demonstrates why Hirsch Ballin was much more liked as a cabinet minister in 2009 than he was in 1990. The quote also shows that a stiff, theoretical, dogmatic, and inflexible style similar to Van Middelkoop’s style can make it difficult to create goodwill in Parliament: “Contrary to his stiff, theoretical performance in the third cabinet Lubbers, [Ernst Hirsch Ballin’s] contemporary performance makes left-wing parliamentarians cut him a lot of slack.”<sup>298</sup>

**Conclusions on Van Middelkoop’s style and skill profile.** Van Middelkoop has two underdeveloped styles and two developed styles. The latter are only slightly present (both +1). Compared to Hirsch Ballin, who has a good amount of every style (+4 and +6 points), Van Middelkoop’s spider diagram is small. Consequently, he could only rely on two skill sets, the political and the rational skills, while a cabinet minister in the Netherlands needs to develop four style & skill sets in order to be successful, according to the inner-circle validation group who helped set up the style questionnaire and the conceptual framework it was built upon.

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<sup>298</sup> *De Volkskrant*, June 3, 2008. Title in Dutch: “Fenomenaal snelle leerling van zichzelf, Dinsdagprofiel Ernst Hirsch Ballin. Original text in Dutch: “De stijve theoreticus uit het derde kabinet-Lubbers kan inmiddels een potje breken bij links.”

Furthermore, Part IV has shown that a cabinet minister in the Netherlands either needs four styles (the Hirsch Ballin way) or needs to have a highly developed public style (the Plasterk way). Eimert van Middelkoop's style and skill profile was lacking either of these characteristics.

The more even the web in Figure 27, the more balanced the style profile of the cabinet minister would be. The shape of Van Middelkoop's spider diagram is problematic. With -1 point on the public style and -3 points on the connective style, the spider web is uneven. None of the styles in Van Middelkoop's style profile are highly developed. The maximum number of points a cabinet minister can get for a style is +8, while the minimum is -8. Van Middelkoop's maximum is +1. The cases researched so far (Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Ronald Plasterk, and Eimert van Middelkoop), indicated that without any highly developed features in a style profile, it may be difficult to attain higher public credibility.

The next paragraph focuses on the analysis of Van Middelkoop's performance in terms of policy goal realization.

**Policy Goal Realization—Eimert van Middelkoop.** This paragraph demonstrates the extent to which Van Middelkoop realized his policy goals that were formulated at the start of the cabinet term in 2007. There will be a focus on his goal realization as discussed by the cabinet and Parliament during Accountability Day in May 2009. Data sources of the analysis in this paragraph are the "Accountability Report"<sup>299</sup> (written by the cabinet), the parliamentary discussion of the report, and the inner-circle interviews on Van Middelkoop's performance.

Eimert van Middelkoop dedicated his term to one policy goal and according to the Accountability Report of the cabinet, he was on "track" in May 2009.<sup>300</sup> Van Middelkoop's

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<sup>299</sup> Document number TK 31951.

<sup>300</sup> Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report (In Dutch: 'bijlage verantwoordingsbrief').

policy goal (number 4. “a modern army”) contained a wide variety of sub-goals written down in the policy letter “Worldwide Service” (in Dutch: *Wereldwijd Dienstbaar*), which was divided into three categories and a research project. The categories doubled as indicators to measure the effect of the policies: human capital (1), material capital (2), and forces (3). Furthermore, there was an action plan to reach an employment rate of 100% in 2011. The NAVO Usability Index showed the percentage of available army forces of each country. Forty percent availability was required; the Dutch army was ranked number 5 in 2007. The Usability Index was used by the cabinet to show that this goal was “on track.”

An overview of Van Middelkoop’s goals and the extent to which he was on track according to the Accountability Report as written by the cabinet and discussed with the Parliament on Accountability Day in May 2009 is shown in Table 31.

Table 31

*Policy Goals of Eimert van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense, 2007–2010*

2008 <b>Beleidsdoelen</b>									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74						
<b>Projecten↓</b>					<b>Sleuteldoelen</b>				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



First Responsibility	Second Responsibility	Realization
	3	Realized
4 (A Modern Army)		Realized – Key goal
	14	Realized
	62	Realized

In the Accountability Report,<sup>301</sup> the cabinet described goal number 4 as follows: “[The Ministry of Defense will work on] “a modern army that is able to offer worldwide service within both large and small crisis operations, to build security organizations in countries that need our assistance.” This goal was considered a key goal (in Dutch: *sleuteldeel*). Key goals were considered more important goals for Dutch society. They are also more difficult to accomplish and they require extra efforts from the cabinet ministers responsible for them.<sup>302</sup>

Van Middelkoop carried shared responsibilities for three additional goals:

- Number 3. Coming closer to a solution within the Middle-East (shared responsibility with the Cabinet Minister of Foreign Affairs)
- Number 14. Enhancing the innovative power of Dutch economy (shared responsibility with the Cabinet Minister of Economic Affairs)

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<sup>301</sup> Document number TK 31951.

<sup>302</sup> Source: the Balkenende IV cabinet, document: Big Board Verantwoordingsdag Mei 1009. Quote in Dutch: “In het voorjaar van 2008 heeft de MR ten aanzien van 19 doelstellingen in het beleidsprogramma aangegeven dat zij een 'sleutelpositie' hebben in de uitvoering van het beleidsprogramma. De top-19 sleuteldoelen is beoordeeld naar mate van -op voorhand- in te schatten moeilijkheid bij de realisatie en maatschappelijke betekenis (belangrijkheid). Voor ongeveer de helft van het aantal doelstellingen in de top-19 sleuteldoelen ligt het kabinet op koers (9 oranje, 9 groen, 2 rood).”

- Number 62. Safety Houses within the larger cities (shared responsibility with the Cabinet Minister of Justice)

**Accountability Day May 2009: Parliament's Comments and Concerns.** During Accountability Day, a few comments were made by the Parliament on Van Middelkoop's work, although most of them concerned his shared responsibilities with other cabinet ministers.

The VVD spokesman was not happy with the cabinet decision not to buy the Joint Strike Fighter, nor did he approve of a committee investigating political decisions that took place prior to the Iraq war. The VVD spokesman stated that the Parliament should carry out this investigation on its own.

The SGP complimented the army on the good work in Afghanistan, but expressed its worries about the cabinet plans to maintain the army in the future. According to the SGP spokesperson, extra investments were necessary. No further comments were made on the Accountability Report of the Ministry of Defense, nor on the progress of Van Middelkoop as a cabinet minister (except perhaps for the SGP comment that there will possibly not be enough money to maintain the army).<sup>303</sup>

The PvdA spokesperson complimented the Ministry of Defense on its budgeting. There had been problems in the years prior to the debate and the Parliament had urged the Defense Ministry to pay attention to this issue. The PvdA spokesperson stated that her party had noticed

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<sup>303</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2008, May 2009. Original text in Dutch: Van der Vlies (SGP): "Als we vervolgens letten op de uitwerking van de beleidsdoelstellingen, dan erkent mijn fractie dat er een aantal stappen voorwaarts is gemaakt is. Ik denk aan de duidelijke inzet van minister Verhagen voor geloofsvervolgden waar ook ter wereld. Ik denk ook aan het verbeteren en versterken van palliatieve zorg. Daar moeten we vooral mee doorgaan. En ik denk bijvoorbeeld aan de professionele inzet van ons leger in Afghanistan. Een kanttekening is daarbij wel op zijn plaats: als we onze krijgsmacht ook in de toekomst professioneel willen houden, moeten we daar wel in willen investeren. En daar mag nog wel heel wat meer gebeuren."

that Defense was doing better now.<sup>304</sup> The CU spokesperson also remembered the Defense budget flaws and agreed with the PvdA spokesperson that Defense was doing a lot better now, and that the Court of Audit had cancelled its investigative procedure against the ministry.<sup>305</sup>

Compared to parliamentary discussions about the other selected cabinet ministers on Accountability Day in May 2009, the discussion on the progress of the Cabinet Minister of Defense offered little clarity.

Unfortunately, only two Parliament members (one from the VVD-party and one from the SGP) commented on Van Middelkoop's progress in terms of policy goal realization. Was Van Middelkoop's portfolio not that interesting or did his work simply not concern the Parliament members much? Or was there a lack of information about Van Middelkoop's progress?

According to the cabinet and Parliament, Van Middelkoop was on track with 100% of his policy sub-goals. This would mean that his policy goal realization was spotless. Since Van Middelkoop was an LPC cabinet minister, this paragraph implies that policy goal realization is not linked to public credibility as much as the other variables described in this dissertation may be. The fact that the previous part of this dissertation has shown that Plasterk, who was an HPC cabinet minister, was not on track with all of his policy goals solidifies that conclusion. After all, so far, there has been an HPC cabinet minister with a problematic goal realization (both according to the cabinet itself and according to Parliament), and an LPC cabinet minister with a flawless goal realization.

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<sup>304</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2008, May 2009. Original text in Dutch: Hamer (PvdA): "Wij hebben in de Kamer heel wat keren gesproken over de begroting van Defensie. Wij hebben hiervoor zelfs gele kaarten uitgedeeld. Wij zien nu dat het beter gaat."

<sup>305</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2008, May 2009. Original text in Dutch: Slob (ChristenUnie): "De toenemende aandacht voor de verantwoording heeft wel gewerkt. Mevrouw Hamer heeft er een voorbeeld van genoemd. Wij hebben een aantal jaren gesproken over de wijze waarop Defensie met zijn begroting bezig was. Er liep een bezwaarprocedure. De Algemene Rekenkamer heeft die nu geschrapt. Ook de druk vanuit de Kamer heeft daarbij geholpen. Graag nu wel aandacht voor de departementen waar dat nog niet het geval is."

Before finalizing these conclusions, however, there are four more sources that may show counter-indications: the accountability debate in May 2008 about the Accountability Report on the first cabinet year (2007), the accountability debate in May 2010 about the Accountability Report on the last cabinet year (2009), the reports of the Court of Audit, and some inner-circle interview comments.

**First Additional Source: Accountability Debate May 22, 2008 (Accountability Report 2007, one Year Prior to the Above Discussed Debate).** A few Parliament members drew attention to the Ministry of Defense during the accountability debate in May 2008. A CU representative stated that “according to the Court of Audit there are some serious problems at the Ministry of Defense.” The party demanded that the cabinet give priority to the problems concerning bonuses and munitions management: “It’s urgent. We are counting on a positive judgment from the Court of Audit on these topics next time.”<sup>306</sup> Members of GroenLinks and SGP also commented that the budgeting at the Ministry of Defense had not been in order for years.<sup>307</sup>

Furthermore, the CU spokesman expressed his concerns about continuing the military mission in Uruzgan, and the heavy burden international military missions have put on the Dutch defense system. The CU spokesman stated that “there is a shortage of operational forces. I expect

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<sup>306</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2007, May 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: Slob (ChristenUnie): “De Algemene Rekenkamer constateert dat er bij de Belastingdienst, Defensie en VROM nog behoorlijke problemen zijn. Kan het kabinet toezeggen dat in 2008 prioriteit wordt gegeven aan het wegwerken van de problemen rondom toeslagen en munitiebeheer – de urgentie is groot – zodat wij de volgende keer een positief oordeel van de Algemene Rekenkamer krijgen op deze onderwerpen?”

<sup>307</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2007, May 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: Halsema (Groenlinks): “Bij Defensie wordt wel geklaagd over geldgebrek en wordt oud-minister Zalm ingehuurd, maar heeft men het eigen financieel beheer jarenlang niet op orde.” Van der Vlies (SGP): “Wanneer wordt er op de probleemdossiers nu eens doorgepakt? Ik noem enkele voorbeelden. Defensie kampt met overschrijdingen.”

the Cabinet to be aware of this.”<sup>308</sup> The SP and PvdA made similar comments. They all urged the Ministry of Defense to organize its budgets and work on its financial accountability.<sup>309</sup>

**Second Additional Source: Accountability Debate May 2010 (Accountability Report 2009).** Only one member of Parliament made an explicit remark about the Cabinet Minister of Defense. Mr. Roemer (SP) criticized Eimert van Middelkoop’s work:

Some Ministries are especially unteachable. You would think that the Cabinet Minister of Defense would have his business straightened out after all the problems in the past. It’s unbelievable that he does not know where his bombs and grenades are located. The annual report shows that this has still not changed. If I was the Cabinet Minister of Defense, reading the never ending list of shortcomings would make me ashamed. My speech time is too short to read the entire list, that’s how long it is. I wonder whether the Cabinet realizes how bad this is. I would like a reaction.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2007, May 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: Slob (ChristenUnie): “Er heeft ook besluitvorming plaatsgehad over belangrijke onderwerpen, zoals de verlenging van de missie in Uruzgan, die niet in dit coalitieakkoord waren afgesproken. De inzet op de buitenlandse missies vraagt overigens veel van Defensie. Uit de verantwoording blijkt de krapte in de operationele inzetbaarheid. Ik neem aan dat het kabinet daar aandacht voor heeft.”

<sup>309</sup> Parliament discussion on Accountability Report 2007, May 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: Marijnissen (SP): “Papier, papier en nog eens papier, allemaal met goede bedoelingen, maar intussen mag het ministerie van Defensie rustig jaren achtereen tekortschieten met zijn financiële verantwoording en de vermelding van de verblijfplaats van wapens en munitie. Dit heeft echt geen zin. Leidend voor ons allen moet niet de papieren werkelijkheid zijn, maar de staat van het land en de reëel bestaande problemen die mensen ondervinden. De fictieve werkelijkheid van het kabinet heeft meer weg van propaganda dan van een eerlijke weergave van de werkelijkheid van alledag voor gewone mensen.”

Hamer (PvdA): “Voorzitter. Ik had twee aandachtspunten: de Belastingdienst en de situatie bij Defensie. Van de Belastingdienst heb ik verleden jaar een groot punt gemaakt. Het bleek dat ik daar ook behoorlijk gelijk in had. Ik heb gezien dat de staatssecretaris keihard heeft gewerkt. Het moet nog een tandje sneller, maar er is vooruitgang. Wij kunnen dit niet van Defensie zeggen. Ik wil graag van het kabinet weten hoe het dat, na vier jaar op rij met zo’n verantwoording te zijn gekomen, gaat oplossen.”

<sup>310</sup> Accountability Debate May 2010 (Accountability Report 2009). Original text in Dutch: Roemer (SP): “Sommige ministeries zijn wel bijzonder hardleers. Je zou denken dat de minister van Defensie na alle problemen in het verleden zijn zaakjes inmiddels wel op orde had, want het is toch wel erg als je niet weet waar je bommen en granaten liggen. Uit het jaarverslag blijkt echter dat dit nog steeds aan de orde is. Ik zou me bijna schamen als ik

### **Third Additional Source: Reports of the Court of Audit on the Ministry of Defense.**

During the parliamentary discussion on the Accountability Report of the cabinet accomplishments in the first cabinet year (on May 22, 2008), a CU parliamentarian commented:

Yesterday the Court of Audit commented that part of the 74 cabinet goals lack a clear description. They are formulated in a way that it is impossible to determine whether the Cabinet has completed its task. My request is that the government will ... make the goals up to date and especially more concrete. ... This is your chance to offer students the right example: make your goals SMART: Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-bound.<sup>311</sup>

Indeed, it seems difficult to create objective knowledge on the work accomplishments (goal realization) of cabinet ministers. To assess the cabinet's policy goal accomplishments is a key task of the parliament, but with limited resources for research, Parliament members are only as strong as their words. The Court of Audit has resources to carry out research and make assessments, but does not assess goal realization. Instead, "the Court of Audit investigates whether central government revenue and expenditure are received and spent correctly and whether central government policy is implemented as intended."<sup>312</sup>

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minister van Defensie was en die eindeloze lijst met tekortkomingen zou lezen. Mijn spreektijd is te kort om die hele lijst voor te lezen, zo lang is die. Ik vraag me af of het kabinet de Eimert van dit probleem wel inziet. Hierop krijg ik graag een reactie."

<sup>311</sup> Original text in Dutch: Slob (ChristenUnie): "De Algemene Rekenkamer meldde gisteren terecht dat veel van de 74 doelen zo algemeen zijn geformuleerd dat het onmogelijk is om te controleren of de regering ook werkelijk iets heeft bereikt. Ik verzoek de regering daarom dringend deze boodschap te verwerken en dus de doelen daar waar nodig en mogelijk te actualiseren en vooral ook te concretiseren. Men leert studenten leerdoelen altijd SMART te formuleren, dus Specifiek, Meetbaar, Acceptabel, Realistisch en Tijdgebonden. Voor een kabinet dat goed onderwijs hoog in het vaandel heeft, overigens terecht, is dit een uitgelezen kans om het goede voorbeeld te geven."

<sup>312</sup> [http://www.rekenkamer.nl/english/Organisation/What\\_is\\_the\\_Court\\_of\\_Audit](http://www.rekenkamer.nl/english/Organisation/What_is_the_Court_of_Audit)

The ministry of Van Middelkoop had been reprimanded a few times by the Court of Audit in the years prior to 2008. In 2009, however, the court concluded that “the cabinet minister has fulfilled the expectations we formulated for March 2009. We formulated new expectations for March 2010 in our report. Based on the proceedings next year, we will decide whether we need to restart the investigation.”<sup>313</sup> After his predecessors left a ministry that did not meet the expectations of the Court of Audit, for now, Van Middelkoop and the Ministry of Defense seemed to have satisfied the Court of Audit.

**Fourth Additional Source: Inner Circle Comments on Eimert van Middelkoop’s**

**Policy Goal Realization.** During the interview with KG on December 16, 2011, the advisor from Van Middelkoop’s inner circle explained that the Minister’s policy goal realization was fine: “Van Middelkoop’s main assignment was to handle Uruzgan and to be able to have military operations going in three different places in the world. I think that Defense under Van Middelkoop kept its promise.”<sup>314</sup>

According to interviewee KG, Van Middelkoop worked on many projects during his term and the most important goals were accomplished before the cabinet resigned (“we were in

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<sup>313</sup> Rapport bij het Financieel Jaarverslag van het Rijk 2008 en uitkomsten rechtmatigheidsonderzoek. ‘Rijk verantwoord 2008’. Original text in Dutch: “Het vanaf 2007 lopende bezwaaronderzoek bij het cabinet ministerie van Defensie is nu afgerond. De minister heeft voldaan aan de concrete verwachtingen die wij gesteld hadden voor maart 2009. In ons rapport bij het jaarverslag hebben we de verwachtingen voor maart 2010 geformuleerd waar het cabinet ministerie van Defensie dan aan moet hebben voldaan. Op basis van geboekte vooruitgang zullen wij volgend jaar opnieuw afwegen of wij bezwaar maken of niet.”

<sup>314</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Waar het uiteindelijk om ging, was Uruzgan en over wereldwijd actief kunnen zijn op 3 plaatsen in de wereld. Ik denk dat voor Van Middelkoop nog nooit zoveel is gepresteerd.”

Bosnia, we established [policies against] piracy. I think [under Van Middelkoop] we were having a very decent army”).<sup>315</sup>

KG, who worked for and with Van Middelkoop before and during his ministry for several years, gave him 8 points out of 10 for taking care of policy goal number 4.<sup>316</sup>

Van Middelkoop was internationally very successful. He was usually asked to be the chairman at international NATO meetings about Uruzgan. He was respected and liked.

But nobody here knows that. He was an intellectual who was more sophisticated than the other politicians he met in NATO meetings. He went through a huge personal development in the four years I worked for him.<sup>317</sup>

KG typified Van Middelkoop as an “open, honest man, with a sense of humor. His [media] image shows a bungler, but the truth is different. He performed at the same level as the other cabinet ministers. He was simply a good cabinet minister.”<sup>318</sup>

Later on in the interview, KG changed his mind a bit, and came to the conclusion that Van Middelkoop’s overall performance cannot be rated 8 points out of 10 after all, because “performance is not the only thing that matters for being a successful cabinet minister.”<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “We zaten in Bosnie, we hebben piraterij op poten gezet. Ik denk dat je eindelijk een krijgsmacht had waarvoor die bedoeld was.”

<sup>316</sup> Politicians and policy makers at Defense call this goal “article 100” for short. Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “Daar zou ik hem een acht voor willen geven.”

<sup>317</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Van Middelkoop had internationaal een geweldige relatie. Hij zat altijd de ... bijeenkomsten voor over Uruzgan in Navo verband. Hij was daar zeer gevierd. Hij lag daar uitermate goed. Niemand die dat ooit hoort of weet. Hij was een intellectueel die met kop en schouders boven de rest uitstak in internationaal verband, Ik hem hem in 4 jaar lang enorm zien groeien.”

<sup>318</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “Het is gewoon een open, eerlijke man, met humor. Het beeld is van de brekebeen, maar de waarheid ligt anders. Hij is van hetzelfde niveau. Het is gewoon een goede cabinet minister geweest.”

<sup>319</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner circle interviewee KG on December 16, 2011: “Als je kijkt Van Middelkoop’s taak: uitvoering van artikel 100 (doel #4), dan zou ik hem een 7 geven. Eigenlijk een 8, alleen gelet op wat ik typeerde als een goede cabinet minister, komt hij het derde punt tekort. Het is natuurlijk meer dan alleen de inhoud.”



According to KG, a cabinet minister is good at his or her job when “they accomplish [goals from the] the Cabinet agreement, when they know how to make policies work, and when they maintain their image in the media.”<sup>320</sup> The latter is where Van Middelkoop failed, according to KG: “it didn’t go wrong on policy making.”<sup>321</sup>

**Van Middelkoop’s Decent Policy Performance.** Based on previously discussed information, this chapter can only be closed with one conclusion: when it comes to policy goal realization, Van Middelkoop was a decent cabinet minister whose shortcomings did not impact the extent to which he was able to establish the policy assignments the cabinet had agreed on at the beginning of his term in 2007. Performance shortcomings were in his media appearances, as discussed in the previous paragraphs.

The next chapter discusses the performance of another LPC cabinet minister in the Balkenende IV cabinet: Jacqueline Cramer. General conclusions about both LPC cabinet ministers will be discussed in the conclusions of this dissertation.

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<sup>320</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert KG on December 16, 2011: “Een cabinet minister is goed als hij zijn programma dat in het regeerakkoord staat weet uit te voeren, als hij het beleid verder kan helpen, als hij politiek overeind blijft in de media. Het ging niet mis op zijn beleid.”

<sup>321</sup> And according to media analyses in this book about Eimert van Middelkoop.

## **Chapter 15: Jacqueline Cramer**

When the respondents of the LISS panel were interviewed in January 2009, Jacqueline Cramer, Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment between 2007 and 2010, had not been able to earn much public credibility: She ended up at the tail of the credibility ranking, and stayed there until the cabinet resigned in 2010 (see Part II). Her perceived honesty was between 56% in January 2009 and 63% in March 2010. Her perceived reliability was between 56% and 65% (compared to over 70% for the HPC cabinet ministers). With only 42.1% of LISS panel respondents considering her competent in January 2009 (and 49% in March 2010), this was the weakest link in her credibility profile.

Before she became a cabinet minister in the fourth Balkenende cabinet, Jacqueline Cramer was a professor of sustainable entrepreneurship at Utrecht University and professor of environmental management at Erasmus University. She was affiliated with the PvdA (labor party), at the time led by Vice Prime Cabinet Minister Wouter Bos. Cramer's case is interesting for reasons elaborately discussed in Part II: Just like Eimert van Middelkoop, she was unable to attain as much perceived reliability, honesty, and competence in 2009 and 2010 as other cabinet ministers. This chapter attempts to understand why she was a lower-credibility cabinet minister by discussing various aspects of her appearance and performance as Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment between 2007 and 2010.

All methods previously applied to Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Ronald Plasterk, and Eimert van Middelkoop will be applied to Jacqueline Cramer in this chapter, except for the inner-circle interviews and the style & skill assessment. No inner circle interviewees at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment were willing to comment on Cramer's performance and style and skill profile as a cabinet minister. Consequently, data on these

variables cannot be discussed. Instead of leaving Cramer out of this study altogether, the other variables (communicated personality patterns and policy goal realization) will still be discussed here, as Cramer provided an interesting case in terms of lower public credibility. Studying her communicated personality patterns and her policy goal realization between 2008 and 2010 has provided the opportunity to compare these elements of her performance as an LPC cabinet minister to the communicated personality patterns and policy goal realization of the HPC and MPC cabinet ministers. This will further the understanding of the concept of public credibility of cabinet ministers in the Netherlands.

**Communicated Personality Profile—Jacqueline Cramer.** In this paragraph, the MIDC will be applied to Cramer as a cabinet minister. The sources used to gather information about Cramer are mostly newspaper articles, some of which contain quotes spoken by people who were interviewed by the journalist about the cabinet minister. Cramer will be displayed as a colleague, a boss, a politician, a cabinet minister, and a friend. Eventually, her communicated personality patterns will be used to understand her lower public credibility more effectively. For an extended discussion of the methods used in this paragraph, see Part IV.

Jacqueline Cramer was affiliated with the PvdA (labor) party, led by Vice Prime Minister Wouter Bos. When she had been in office for one year, a newspaper journalist wrote that “everyone sums up the same features [of Jacqueline Cramer]: intelligent, energetic, bubbly; motivating; rational, efficient, purposeful.”<sup>322</sup> This was obviously a very positive view on Cramer. Throughout her term, the source materials show that many people liked her, and many nice compliments were made regarding her personality. In terms of the MIDC, she often appeared sociable (MIDC criterion A3a), expressive (D3a), accommodating (A4a), and dutiful

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<sup>322</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 31, 2008. “Alle gesprekspartners sommen dezelfde eigenschappen op: intelligent; energiek; sprankelend; motiverend; rationeel; efficiënt; doelgericht.”

(A6a). However, she also appeared somewhat inept (A4b), conciliatory (B4a), watchful (A7a), and uneasy (D7A), especially when publicly attacked, described as follows:

Cramer seems affected by this political ragging. She often looks defensive, seems to have swapped her spontaneity for pre-cooked stories. Moreover, her presentation is still lacking. She has the misfortune that her natural glance comes across like a startled look on television. She doesn't know her way with sound bites [and] loses herself in the details during debates. "Some people know too much for politics," sighs an insider.<sup>323</sup>

Another newspaper published an article in which the conclusion was that Cramer was "a little too civilized for the difficult cases."<sup>324</sup> This idea seemed to stick to her image and may have been difficult to shed:

The Minister is tired of constantly hearing about her being "not a real politician." "I'm really not a pushover, I know exactly what I want." Sometimes I do get angry. Really. When they throw something at me during a Parliament meeting, I say: well, it is enough. Then the members of the Parliament turn their heads and think: oops.<sup>325</sup>

Cramer's demeanor was very polite and respectful, even when she wanted to communicate anger, as in the quote above. Her lack of perceived competence, as discussed in Part II of this dissertation, may be rooted in the combination of her accommodating (scale 4),

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<sup>323</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 31, 2008. "Cramer lijkt aangedaan door deze politieke ontgroening. Ze oogt vaak defensief, lijkt haar geroemde spontaniteit te hebben verruild voor voorgekookte verhalen. Bovendien laat haar presentatie nog te wensen over. Zo heeft ze de pech dat haar natuurlijke oogopslag op televisie overkomt als een verschrikte blik. Met de soundbite weet ze zich geen raad, in debatten verliest ze zich vaak in details. 'Je kunt ook te veel weten voor de politiek,' zucht een insider."

<sup>324</sup> *De Volkskrant*, May 6, 2008. "Iets te beschaafd voor de lastige dossiers."

<sup>325</sup> *De Volkskrant*, December 5, 2009. "De minister is het zat om steeds maar weer te moeten horen dat ze 'geen echte politica' is. 'Ik ben heus geen doetje, ik weet precies wat ik wil.' Soms word ik wel boos. Echt hoor. Als ik dan weer iets in die zaal naar mijn hoofd krijg, dan zeg ik: nou is het wel welletjes. Dan kijken de Kamerleden ook wel op: Oei."

aggrieved (scale 5A), and conscientious (scale 6) communicated personality profile, because she may have made the impression that she was “not bad enough to be a good minister (...).”<sup>326</sup> In other words: respectful, polite, and humble behavior may be valued in a neighbor or a friend, but when a cabinet minister mainly communicates these characteristics, and none of the stronger leadership characteristics such as dominance, dauntlessness, or ambition (like Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk did), people in the audience may suspect that the cabinet minister will not be prepared for the job. After all, the ministry, the cabinet, and Parliament all provide a highly political and potentially harsh social environment. The hypothesis that Cramer’s communicated personality profile contained too many soft elements to inspire reliability and competence belief, and that it was therefore very difficult for her to attain higher or medium credibility, will be investigated below.

**Sources and the Process of Analysis.** To diagnose Cramer’s communicated personality pattern, 135 articles published between January 2007 and February 2010 were scanned and 42 articles were analyzed and labeled following the rules of the MIDC method (Immelman, 2004). The articles, as published in newspapers and magazines, came out during the 3 years following the start of the cabinet in 2007 and before the last credibility measurement took place, which was just after the cabinet resigned in February 2010. All quotes from the articles will be discussed in this paragraph and in Appendix 23. Each quote will be accompanied by an endnote that reveals the newspaper, publication date, and the original text in Dutch. The score sheet in Table 32 has been used to diagnose Jacqueline Cramer’s communicated personality by means of the MIDC.

Table 32

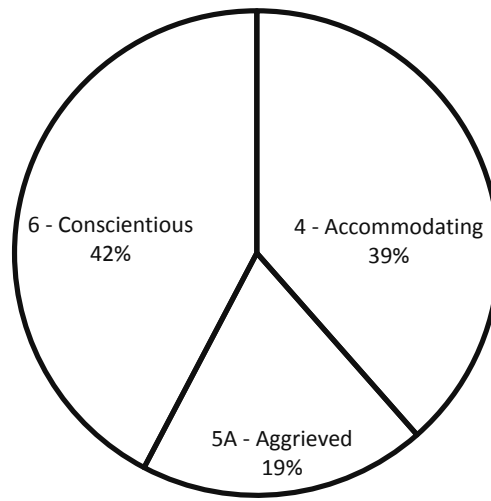
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<sup>326</sup> *De Volkskrant*, December 5, 2009. “‘Ach, Jacqueline. Je bent niet slecht genoeg om een goede minister te zijn. Eerlijk is eerlijk. Als ik daar zou zitten was ik al duurzaam dood geweest.’ Dat gaat toch over karakter? U bent niet het type dat over lijken gaat.”

*MIDC Shore Sheet Jacqueline Cramer: Communicated Personality between January 2007 and February 2010*

	Jacqueline Cramer, Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2007–2010								
	4 - Accommodating			5A – Aggrieved			6 - Conscientious		
Gradation points	a	b	c	a	B	c	a	b	c
A	1	2		1			1	2	
B	1			1			1		
C	1	2		1			1		
D				1					
E	1	2		1			1	2	3
26 RAW	10			5			11		
100 %	38.5 %			19.2 %			42.3 %		

**Jacqueline Cramer:  
written sources**



*Figure 28.* MIDC pie chart for Jacqueline Cramer’s communicated personality between 2007 and 2010, based on written sources (press articles) and data from Table 32.<sup>327</sup>

**Results of MIDC analysis: Cramer’s Communicated Personality Patterns.** Jacqueline Cramer’s communicated personality profile, based on the source materials, will be discussed below, based on the analysis by means of the MIDC (Immelman, 2004). Does Cramer’s communicated personality profile help us to understand why she was unable to attain higher public credibility during her term? Why was she perceived as incompetent (and also relatively unreliable) by LISS panel respondents? A few answers can be given based on the score sheet in Table 32.

Cramer’s most present communicated personality pattern was the conscientious pattern (scale 6, 43.3%). This pattern has been associated with higher credibility (in Hirsch Ballin’s case). Since both Van Middelkoop and Cramer have also communicated conscientious personality patterns, and since their public credibility was relatively low, the presence of conscientious communicated personality patterns cannot be considered a warranty for higher public credibility. However, the hypothesis developed in the previous chapter, that conscientious communicated personality patterns are linked to higher public credibility, but only when stronger leadership patterns are present in a cabinet minister’s communicated personality profile (such as

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<sup>327</sup> How to read Figure 28. The score sheet only shows the cells (attribute domains and scales/patterns) in which Jacqueline Cramer’s communicated personality is present between 2007 and 2010. Each of the 45 MIDC criteria represents a feature (characteristic) of the target person’s communicated personality. For example, the first, top left criterion stands for “accommodating” and will be referred to as A4a (attribute A refers to expressive behavior, scale 4 is the accommodating pattern, gradation a is the first gradation: Cramer’s communicated personality receives 1 point for this criterion (Immelman, 2004).

The bottom row shows the percentage of points Cramer’s communicated personality receives on each scale (pattern). For example, on scale 6, the conscientious pattern, Cramer gets 11 RAW points, which represents 42.3% of her communicated personality profile.

scale 1A, the dominant pattern), still stands, because Cramer communicated none of the stronger leadership patterns, and neither did Van Middelkoop.

Like Van Middelkoop, Cramer showed some accommodating behavior (scale 4, 38.5%). In the case of Van Middelkoop, this behavior seemed to make a weak impression and seemed to allow journalists to scapegoat him in the media. A similar mechanism may have been at work in Cramer's case, as she, too, received a great deal of criticism in newspapers compared to other cabinet ministers between 2007 and 2010. In any case, since accommodating communicated personality patterns are found in both of the LPC cabinet ministers, and in none of the higher-credibility cabinet ministers, a new hypothesis can be formed: accommodating communicated personality patterns may be linked to lower public credibility.

The scapegoating effect (as discussed with regard to Cramer's case in Part II) may have been exacerbated because of Cramer's third communicated personality pattern: the aggrieved pattern (19.2% of her profile). Apologetic behavior like Cramer's may be linked to lower public credibility scores.

None of the patterns were exaggerated, as the results of the MIDC analysis show. In the case of Hirsch Ballin, the lack of exaggerated patterns seemed to be linked to higher public credibility. However, Cramer's case shows that this is not necessarily so, as none of her patterns were present to an extreme degree (also, Plasterk's communicated personality profile showed some robust evidence for a Level II personality pattern that was prominent, and he was a higher-credibility cabinet minister). The four cases show that the existence of exaggerated patterns does not seem to be linked to higher or lower public credibility.

**The Strength of Evidence and Range of Personality Types.** Cramer's communicated personality profile (her MIDC personality profile as communicated through Dutch newspapers),



contained three communicated personality patterns, none of which “suggest maladaptive exaggerated features” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15).

Table 33 shows an overview of Cramer’s communicated personality profile. Scale 4 (the accommodating pattern) and scale 6 (the conscientious pattern) are most present within her communicated personality, but evidence for all attribute domains of the MIDC has not been found.<sup>328</sup> The only scale on which evidence in all five attribute domains was found is the aggrieved pattern. There is robust evidence for a Level I personality type there (Immelman, 2004, p. 15).

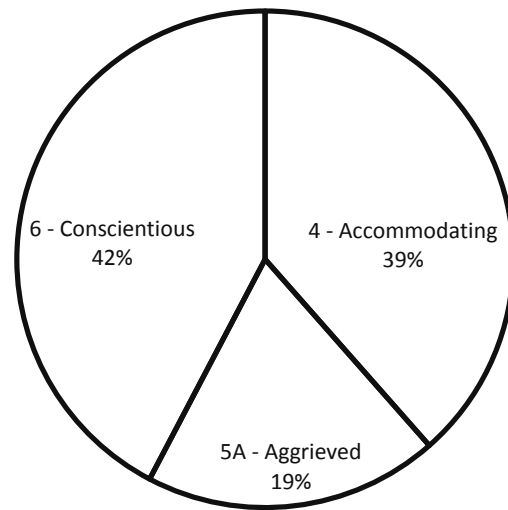
Table 33

*Overview of Jacqueline Cramer’s Personality Profile*

Scale	Attributes	Points	Evidence	Level	Diagnose
4 - Accommodating	A, B, C, E	10	x	x	x
6 - Conscientious	A, B, C, E	11	x	x	x
5A - Aggrieved	A, B, C, D, E	5	Robust	Level I	Present (normal range)

<sup>328</sup> If Immelman’s original method (2004) were to be applied here, there would have to be “identification of a criterion at the second level (scored 2 points) in all five attribute domains of a given personality pattern,” which “provides convincing evidence for the existence of the personality type associated with those criteria” (Immelman, 2004, p. 15). This is not the case, as the source materials have only provided quotes that refer to criteria from four out of five attribute domains (A, B, C, E on scales 4 and 6). However, this study is an analysis of communicated personalities rather than biographical personalities. Therefore, Immelman’s justification is not a hard requirement. The evidence on all three patterns will be discussed below, as it provides important clues for understanding public credibility of cabinet ministers in action.

## Jacqueline Cramer: written sources



**Discussion: the Conscientious Pattern (Scale 6).** In the source materials,<sup>329</sup> Cramer came across as dutiful (A6a), respectful (B6a), and circumspect (C6a), and she often referred to herself as reliable and conscientious (E6a, E6b). When it came to global warming and other environmental problems, she seemed very passionate and determined. Occasionally, she may have come across as somewhat righteous (E6c).

Immelman describes the features of people with conscientious patterns as “dutiful, dependable, and principled but rigid personalities” (2004, p. 43). As the source materials show,<sup>330</sup> Cramer was indeed described as dutiful. She did what she was asked to do, but against all odds, sometimes being dutiful brought her trouble. In the following quote, it is seen that Parliament punished her for not providing the information it needed. It turned out that the cabinet minister did not deliberately withhold information; she was just obeying the chairwoman’s

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<sup>329</sup> See a larger selection of quotes in Appendix 24.

<sup>330</sup> See Appendix 24 for all of the quotes in the source materials.

wishes: “[The cabinet minister made it clear that] there is no fraud whatsoever. Why did she not do that right away? [Her answer:] ‘The chairwoman wanted me to keep it brief, so I did’”<sup>331</sup> (A4a, accommodating, A4b, inept, B4a, conciliatory, A6a, dutiful).

Immelman (2004, p. 43) continues to describe features of the more extreme side of the conscientious pattern. Luckily for Cramer, only one of these features was mentioned in the source materials: In a few articles she came across as a bit self-righteous with regard to her passionate fight against global warming. Immelman (2004) says that “in its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the Conscientious pattern displays itself in moralistic, self-righteous, uncompromising, cognitively constricted, compulsive behavior patterns” (p. 43).

The following quote shows that Minister Cramer was not supported by other cabinet ministers when she took the green philosophy to the next level: “Environment Cabinet Minister Jacqueline Cramer (60) only provided vegetarian food at official dinners. She was hoping that her fellow cabinet ministers would follow her example. But the Cabinet chopped her proposal”<sup>332</sup> (A4b, inept, E6a, reliable, E6b, conscientious, E6c, righteous).

In her quest for a cleaner world, she came across as reliable and conscientious, but possibly also a bit righteous and uncompromising. The article gave the impression that her colleague cabinet ministers thought of her as a bit moralistic when she tried to make a case for

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<sup>331</sup> *Het Parool*, September 24, 2008. “Als de Tweede Kamer vindt dat een minister ergens antwoord op moet geven, dan moet die antwoord geven. cabinet minister Jacqueline Cramer van Milieu heeft dat nog altijd niet goed door. Daardoor heeft ze een haat-liefdeverhouding met het parlement ontwikkeld, die gisteren weer eens tot uitbarsting kwam. (...) Alle partijen, inclusief Jacqueline Cramers eigen PvdA, buitelden over elkaar heen om te zeggen dat ze het verzoek steunden. In één moeite door gaven ze de minister een veeg uit de pan. Boris van der Ham van D66 noemde haar zelfs een groentje. Na afloop zei een licht aangeslagen minister dat niet zij, maar collega Maria van der Hoeven van Economische Zaken over de prijs van groene stroom gaat. Verder komt groene stroom uit Noorwegen, wordt die opgewekt met behulp van waterkrachtcentrales en is die volkomen betrouwbaar. Van oplichting is geen sprake. Waarom ze dat niet meteen had gezegd? ‘De voorzitter wilde dat ik het kort hield, dus dat heb ik gedaan.’”

<sup>332</sup> *Elsevier*, February 6, 2010. “Milieuminister Jacqueline Cramer (60) verstrekt tijdens officiële diners alleen nog vegetarisch voedsel. Zij hoopte dat haar collega-ministers dit voorbeeld zouden volgen. Maar de ministerraad maakte gehakt van haar voorstel.”

vegetarianism, and because her ideas differed from the ideas of the others she became a target of mild but unpleasant mockery and criticism.

**Discussion: The Accommodating and Aggrieved Patterns (scale 4 and 5A).** Jacqueline Cramer's second most present communicated personality pattern is the accommodating pattern (Immelman, 2004, p. 34). Immelman (2004) describes personalities at the well-adjusted pole of this pattern as "devoted, conciliatory [and] cooperative" (p. 34). In the MIDC, being conciliatory means being "solicitous and conflict-averse; generally uncritical and accepting" (Immelman, 2004, p. 36). The source materials dated between 2007 and 2010 (when Cramer was Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) show that Immelman's description fits her communicated personality well. The following quote shows that, however naturally conciliatory and cooperative, she was devoted to her cause and determined to move on past the alpha personalities in politics: "But I really learned, I will not just let them push me aside"<sup>333</sup> (A4a, accommodating).

Furthermore, "exaggerated accommodating features occur in unassertive, compliant, agreeable personalities" (Immelman, 2004, p. 34). Being known as unassertive and compliant seemed to become one of Cramer's biggest credibility threats in 2008. The following quote demonstrates how she was reportedly being overshadowed by Maria van der Hoeven, who ended up getting what she wanted:

Jacqueline Cramer is said to lack power during debates, has shortcomings when it comes to dealing with the media and remains in the shadow of heavyweight Maria van der Hoeven (CDA, Economic Affairs). [Jacqueline Cramer] claimed on television that nuclear energy will not be an option until 2030. "A little premature," said Van der

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<sup>333</sup> *De Volkskrant*, December 5, 2009. "Maar ik heb echt wel geleerd, ik laat me niet zomaar aan de kant zetten."

Hoeven. That same week they released a joint letter with a more nuanced message:

“We’re still thinking about nuclear power.”<sup>334</sup> (A4b, inept, B4a, conciliatory)

Immelman (2004) continues on to explain that “in its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the Accommodating pattern displays itself in dependent, incompetent, submissive behavior patterns” (p. 34). The author of the following quote, from a different newspaper than the above, also seemed to believe that Cramer was unable to stand up to Van der Hoeven:

Jacqueline Cramer was in the clinch with Van der Hoeven on nuclear energy:

Jacqueline Cramer is against it. She wants the business to focus on renewables, and nuclear power would slow down that development. But the CDA Cabinet Minister of Economic Affairs sees merit in nuclear energy and wants to give companies an opportunity to start building nuclear power plants immediately after 2011.

Jacqueline Cramer has more or less given up the struggle, and lately she has been operating more internationally.<sup>335</sup> (A4a, accommodating, A4a, inept, B4a, conciliatory, C4a, open-minded)

The source materials have demonstrated that Cramer came across as a cabinet minister with a typical accommodating communicated personality pattern (scale 4). Similar to Van

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<sup>334</sup> *De Volkskrant*, May 6, 2008. “In Den Haag zingt rond dat Itha door het ministerie in de arm is genomen om de twee PvdA-ministers Jacqueline Cramer en Ella Vogelaar (Wonen, Wijken en Integratie) in een beter daglicht te stellen. De laatste tijd krijgen de twee dames veel kritiek. Jacqueline Cramer zou niet krachtig genoeg overkomen in het debat, ze is weinig mediageniek en staat soms in de schaduw van zwaargewicht Maria van der Hoeven (CDA, Economische Zaken). Ze sprak voor haar beurt door op televisie te verkondigen dat kernenergie tot 2030 geen optie was. ‘Iets te voorbarig’, reageerde Van der Hoeven daarop. Diezelfde week verscheen een gezamenlijke brief van de ministers met een genuanceerdere boodschap: ‘Het denken over kernenergie staat niet stil.’”

<sup>335</sup> *Trouw*, November 18, 2008. “Met haar collega Van der Hoeven lag ze in de clinch over kernenergie. Jacqueline Cramer is tegen. Zij wil dat het bedrijfsleven zich stort op duurzame energievormen en kerncentrales zouden die ontwikkeling tegen houden. Maar de CDA-minister van economische zaken ziet wel iets in kernenergie, en wil energiebedrijven gelegenheid geven om na 2011 direct te beginnen met de bouw van kerncentrales. Jacqueline Cramer heeft die strijd min of meer opgegeven, en ze opereert momenteel vooral internationaal.”

Middelkoop, who also reportedly sought after working more in international circles after he was confronted with much criticism in the Netherlands, Cramer's image most likely suffered from her accommodating demeanor. A flight reaction, whether it is really what Cramer did, or whether it was made up by the media, can quickly be interpreted as 'giving up'.

As part I has shown, LISS panel respondents believe that competence, after reliability and honesty, is one of the most important features of an HPC cabinet minister. Jacqueline Cramer did not manage to attain much perceived competence, and communicating her accommodating behavior may have contributed to her soft image. Immelman (2004, p. 34) typifies accommodating (A4a) personalities as "devoted, conciliatory, cooperative." Those are positive elements of the accommodating pattern that correspond to the impression she often made in the media. However, the source materials have also revealed that Cramer was often displayed as inept (A4b), much like the description of accommodating individuals by Immelman (2004): "docile, compliant [and] passive" (p. 36). The accommodating patterns in Jacqueline Cramer's communicated personality profile may have made her look like a pushover, and like someone who cares and worries too much. If Jacqueline Cramer indeed came across in the media as an accommodating individual, like Immelman (2004) described, it is understandable why her perceived competence, and therefore her public credibility, was low compared to that of other ministers in the Balkenende IV cabinet.

A smaller part (19.2%) of Jacqueline Cramer's communicated personality profile contains aggrieved patterns (scale 5A). In the source materials,<sup>336</sup> Jacqueline Cramer appeared to be humble (A5Aa). According to Millon (1994a), this behavior refers to people who come across

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<sup>336</sup> See Appendix 24 for all of the quotes from source materials on Jacqueline Cramer's communicated personality patterns.

as “unpresuming and unpretentious; self-deprecating or self-effacing,” and they “avoid displaying their talents and aptitudes” (p. 33; Immelman, 2004, p. 38).

Furthermore, evidence from the source materials shows that Jacqueline Cramer came across as deferential (B5Aa), unsure (C5Aa), and wistful (D5Aa), and that she sometimes referred to herself as inconsequential (E5Aa). Communicating the aggrieved personality pattern may damage a cabinet minister’s credibility, as the pattern embodies very few positive features and a lot of features that are generally associated with weakness or negativity.

Immelman (2004) explains that “at the well-adjusted pole are humble, unpretentious, deferential personalities” (p. 37). These features may sound nice, but they can be a pitfall for a cabinet minister, who operates in a political environment. The following quote shows that Cramer’s image and her public credibility must have suffered from her scale 5A-appearance, because by denying that her plans were soft, she actually admitted that they might have been exactly that. She drew attention to her reported weakness as a cabinet minister by giving journalists the punch line “‘My plans are not soft as butter,’ Environment Cabinet Minister Jacqueline Cramer (PvdA) Believes in the Gentle Approach”<sup>337</sup> (A4a, accommodating, A5Aa, humble, B5Aa, deferential, C5Aa, unsure).

Another quote in which Cramer seemed humble and unpretentious had a similar effect, as she seemed deferential: “It is the audience you have to face as a minister. I’m not used to being at

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<sup>337</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, September 27, 2007. “‘Mijn plannen zijn niet boterzacht’; Milieuminister Jacqueline Cramer (PvdA) gelooft in de vriendelijke aanpak.”

the center of attention”<sup>338</sup> (A4a, accommodating, A4b, inept, B4a, conciliatory, C5Aa, unsure, C6a, circumspect).

Immelman (2004) continues to describe the various stages of the aggrieved pattern: “Exaggerated Aggrieved features occur in self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-abasing personalities” (p. 37). When Cramer showed her exasperation after being verbally attacked by her fellow discussants, which caused her to leave the television set, her personality showed self-denying and self-abasing elements, because instead of making a positive statement, she denied her own importance:

“You have so much criticism—do it yourself!” After this outburst, Cabinet Minister Jacqueline Cramer (Spatial Planning and Environment) stamped away from the studios of TV Nova, late September. It demonstrated her frustration about politics. Parliamentarians Wijnand Duyvendak and Halbe Zijlstra had agreed to join forces against the cabinet minister. Talk show host Clairry Polak joined them. The cabinet minister was shot from the left because she didn’t favor a meat tax, and from the right because she does not prefer nuclear energy. Jacqueline Cramer was lost in technical language and uncertain pep talk.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> *De Volkskrant*, December 5, 2009. “Het is natuurlijk de publieke tribune waar je voor staat als minister. Ik ben niet zo gewend om mijzelf te overschreeuwen.”

<sup>339</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 31, 2008. “‘Jullie hebben zoveel kritiek - doe het dan zelf!’ Na deze uitval stampvoette minister Jacqueline Cramer (Ruimte en Milieu) weg uit de studio van tv-programma Nova, eind september. Het tekende haar frustratie over het politieke spel. De Kamerleden Wijnand Duyvendak van GroenLinks en Halbe Zijlstra van de VVD hadden bij de schmink afgesproken samen op te trekken tegen de minister. Presentatrice Clairry Polak sloot zich bij hen aan. De minister werd van links beschoten omdat ze zich niet uitsprak voor een vleestaks en van rechts omdat ze geen kernenergie wenste. Jacqueline Cramer verloor zich in beleidstaal en onzekere peptalk.”



(A4b, inept, B4a, conciliatory, A5Aa, humble, C5Aa, unsure, D5Aa, wistful, E5Aa, inconsequential)

What could Cramer have done to (re)build her credibility? Unfortunately, new cabinet ministers often make cardinal mistakes in the first year of their terms. Both Van Middelkoop and Cramer reportedly did. This caused the media to pick on them throughout the rest of the cabinet term. As a result of the bashing media, cabinet ministers may become nervous and may even start having doubts about their own competences as a cabinet minister. The cases of Cramer and Van Middelkoop have shown that it is very difficult to recover from a weak image within a cabinet term. When Hirsch Ballin was a cabinet minister for the first time in 1989, he experienced this as well. Decades later, when he was older and more experienced, his stumbling had been nearly forgotten. In 2006, he was able to build the best public credibility profile of all cabinet ministers of the Balkenende IV cabinet. He was admired both by outsiders and insiders.

Cramer's public credibility would have benefited from a more confident image. When Dig Ishta, a famous image-building coach for politicians, started coaching her, she began making a better impression, according to a journalist:

If the buzz is true, [Dig] Ishta has brought Cabinet Minister Jacqueline Cramer on the right track within a few days. The criticism does not bother her, she says confidently.

With her hands folded on the table before she makes a stable impression. "Every morning I happily head to work."<sup>340</sup> (C4a, open-minded)

As discussed in Part II, Cramer made a fairly honest impression on the LISS panel, which may be linked to her accommodating personality profile. But self-deprecating behavior may not

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<sup>340</sup> *De Volkskrant*, May 6, 2008. "Als de gonzende berichten waar zijn, heeft Ishta minister Jacqueline Cramer binnen een paar dagen al op de goede weg. Ze ligt niet wakker van de kritiek die ze krijgt, vertelt ze zelfverzekerd. Met de handen gevouwen voor zich op tafel maakt ze een stabiele indruk. 'Ik ga iedere ochtend fluitend naar mijn werk.'"

always seem fit for a cabinet minister. The source materials in Appendix 23 show that her accommodating-aggrieved-conscientious communicated personality patterns often made her come across a cabinet minister with a lack of political self-esteem. This may have inspired journalists to scapegoat her more. It seems that she has fallen prey to the same mechanisms in the media as did Van Middelkoop (see previous chapter). In her case, a combination of the accommodating, aggrieved, and conscientious patterns in her communicated personality profile, especially in the first year of her term, may be to blame for her lower public credibility.

**Policy Goal Realization—Jacqueline Cramer.** Cramer dedicated her term as Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment to 13 policy goals. She carried first responsibility on six policy goals and one project. She was on track with 10 out of 13 goals at the end of 2008, according to the Accountability Report published in May 2009.<sup>341</sup> Goal 24 (one of the more important key goals) on which another cabinet minister carried first responsibility, was

<sup>341</sup> Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report (In Dutch: “bijlage verantwoordingsbrief”).

2008 Beleidsdoelen									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74						
Projecten↓					Sleuteldoelen				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

not on track. Of all policy goals for which Cramer was first responsible, Project 4 and policy goal 21 were not sufficiently realized, as noted in the Accountability Report of May 2009.<sup>342</sup>

Cramer's policy portfolio was complex, concerning global issues such as climate change and energy efficiency. The character of the portfolio required deliberation with stakeholders on many levels (ranging from specific regions to the world as a whole) and of various types (civil, public, private, and corporate). The policy goals with which Cramer was involved during her term as a cabinet minister between 2007 and 2010 will be listed and discussed below, in order to discover whether, and in which way, policy goal realization may be linked to her inability to attain more public credibility during her term in 2009 and 2010.

Jacqueline Cramer carried first responsibility for the following goals:

- P4 – not on track (becoming “Clean and Sparing” – in Dutch: *Schoon en Zuinig*);<sup>343</sup>
- 8 – (participating actively in creating new ambitious international climate goals after 2012);<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>343</sup> “Project 4. *Schoon en Zuinig* (Clean and Sparing). In the year 2008, progress was made concerning CO<sub>2</sub> emission, sustainable energy, and energy saving. The Cabinet claims to be prepared to reach the 2011 goals, as indicated by the Monitor and Exploration Clean and Sparing (sent to Parliament on April 29, 2009). However, the Cabinet thinks that the 2008 indicated goals are not sufficiently realized. The “covenant IPO” and the amount of biofuel used for road traffic were not sufficiently covered. The cabinet minister is not on track because of these specific indicators. The ECN (planning bureau for living environment) and SenterNovem monitor progress up to 2011 and 2020. To fight the negative influence a bad economy might have on the progress of this goal, sustainability has become an important point of interest within the additional policy agreement *Werken aan de Toekomst* (Working on the Future). Sustainable energy and energy saving within neighborhood areas will be a topic of special Cabinet attention.”

<sup>344</sup> “8. Actively participating in creating new ambitious international climate goals after 2012. In December 2009 in Copenhagen, the world countries will discuss these climate goals and try to come to a consensus. This is a reason for the Cabinet to conclude that Jacqueline Cramer is on track here, which is strange considering it is about future work. The focus of the international climate policies will change from designing goals to implement and reaching goals. In spite of being highly dependent on the outcome in Copenhagen, the Cabinet has formulated her own sub goals for 2010 and 2011 in which the expectations concerning cabinet minister Jacqueline Cramer's work are written down. A success of Jacqueline Cramer (according to the Cabinet) is that in 2008 the Dutch criteria for a financial architecture

- 21 – not on track (before 2010, the government wants sustainability to be an important argument within all its future purchases of any kind);<sup>345</sup>
- 22 – (stimulating sustainable consumer behavior and production);<sup>346</sup>
- 23 – a key goal (enhancing the number of available business properties and 80,000-100,000 new homes every year);<sup>347</sup>
- 26 – (a climate-friendly and future-resistant design of the country and more focus on natural processes (bottom, water, nature));<sup>348</sup>
- 29 – (realizing a few complex, intertwined spacial projects of national value).<sup>349</sup>

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are internationally accepted in Poznan.” Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>345</sup> “21. Before 2010, the government wants sustainability to be an important argument within all its future purchases of any kind. The indicator for success in 2008 is to have 75% of the product groups covered with sustainability criteria. In 2008 only 49% of the product groups these criteria are formulated. However within the first quarter of 2009, the 2008 goal was realized. The Cabinet concludes that strictly Jacqueline Cramer is not on track, but practically she is.” Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>346</sup> “22. Stimulating sustainable consumer behavior and production. By means of new tax policies, pollution and sustainable behavior are supposed to determine the market price of goods in the future, but only if alternative options are available. At request of the Parliament, an agreement on visibly charging consumers for the wrapping material of goods (the cost would be printed on the receipt), will not be executed any further.” Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>347</sup> “23. Enhancing the number of available business properties and 80,000-100,000 new homes every year, depending on the market.” According to Taskforce Noordanus, Jacqueline Cramer is on track with over 80,000 new homes in 2008. It will be hard to maintain this level in 2009 though, as this goal is likely to be highly influenced by the credit crisis and economic recession since 2008. The Cabinet formulates plans to keep on track within the policy agreement *Werken aan de Toekomst* (Working on the Future). Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>348</sup> “26. A climate-friendly and future-resistant design of the country and more focus on natural processes (bottom, water, nature). Jacqueline Cramer collaborates with the Ministries of Traffic & Water and Agriculture. Within spacial planning and water management, sustainable climate policies belong to the most complex and difficult public tasks of the twenty-first century. It requires collaboration between governments, corporations, and civil society. Within the National Adaption Strategy and Agenda important guidelines are discussed.” Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

<sup>349</sup> “29. Realizing a few complex, intertwined spacial projects of national value. The second chamber is informed by a letter from the Ministry (TK 26 435, nr. 192) and twice a year a report comes out (Nota Ruimtebudget). Jacqueline Cramer is responsible for dividing the money within the space budget legitimately. The cabinet ministerraad (Council of Cabinet Ministers) decided whether a project is worth spending a part of the budget on.” Source: Document number TK 31951, Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report.

Additionally, Cramer shared responsibility with other cabinet ministers for quite a few policy goals of the Balkenende IV cabinet (policy goals 15, 16, 24, 27, 63, and 69). This indicates the complexity of her portfolio. On top of that, two of the shared goals were key goals: number 16 and 24.

An overview of Cramer's goals and the extent to which she is on track according to the Accountability Report (written by the cabinet and discussed with the Parliament on Accountability Day in May 2009), is presented in Table 34.

Table 34

*Policy Goals of Jacqueline Cramer, Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2007–2010.*

Based on the Accountability Report of April/May 2009.

First responsibility	Second responsibility	Realization
P4		Not realized
8		Realized
	15	Realized
	16	Key goal
21		Not realized
22		Realized
23		Realized – Key goal
	24	Not realized – Key goal
26		Realized
	27	Realized

29		Realized
	63	Realized
	69	Realized

**Policy goals of Jacqueline Cramer.** Table 34 shows that during her term as a cabinet minister, Cramer was responsible for the realization of many policy goals, three of which were considered key goals, which are more important and more difficult to accomplish. Cramer did not manage to remain on track with all policy goals. Her portfolio had a lot in common with that of her colleague Guusje ter Horst (see next chapter), who was responsible for 12 policy goals, of which four were not on track in May 2009. The difference, other than the content of their goals, was that Ter Horst only shared responsibility for one goal with other cabinet ministers, whereas Cramer shared responsibility on almost half of all the goals she was involved in.

Some of the cabinet ministers had one or two unrealized goals, but Cramer was involved in three unrealized goals, two of which were shared goals. In contrast to Ter Horst, Cramer did not carry first responsibility for an unrealized key goal. However, she did carry second responsibility for an unrealized key goal (policy goal number 24).

Of all her first-responsibility policy goals and projects, Cramer seemed to be least successful on realizing Project 4 and goal 21, as discussed in the Accountability Report in May 2009. On Project 4, the cabinet stated that “certain sub goals planned for 2008 have not been fully met, for example the covenant IPO and the amount of bio fuel in road traffic.”<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Source: *Bigboard*, May 2009. PowerPoint presentation of Accountability Report 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Schoon en Zuinig. Op het Big Board is dit project ‘rood’: de beoogde voortgang ligt niet op koers. In het jaar 2008 (en de eerste helft van 2009) is substantiële voortgang geboekt (zoals op het gebied van uitstoot broeikasgassen, duurzame energie en energiebesparing) en is een goede basis gelegd om de doelen voor 2011 te halen, zo blijkt ook uit de Monitor en Verkenning Schoon en Zuinig die op 29 april jl. aan de Tweede Kamer is gezonden. Toch waren

On goal 21 (“sustainability as an important criterion in all government purchases”), the Cabinet explained that:

this goal is not on track because there should be sustainability criteria for at least 75% of the product groups; in 2008 only 49% has been realized. ... However, in the first quarter of 2009 this delay has been resolved. During the next measurement this goal will be on track.<sup>351</sup>

**First additional source: Parliament comments and concerns in May 2009**

**(Accountability Report 2008).** During the parliamentary discussion on Accountability Day 2009, sustainability and the environment were some of the most discussed topics. Cramer’s Accountability Report fueled an inflamed discussion. Climate, energy, and sustainability were popular topics in which many parties in the Dutch Parliament were interested. Several of the goals within Cramer’s portfolio were not on track. Parliamentarians expressed their concerns.

Although considered a taboo, according to the VVD spokesman, building nuclear power stations was absolutely necessary to provide the people with energy in the future without having

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enkele van de beoogde tussendoelen die het kabinet zich had voorgenomen voor ultimo 2008 (nog) niet op alle onderdelen gerealiseerd (w.o. convenant met IPO en het aandeel biobrandstoffen in het wegverkeer). De kleur rood wordt louter door deze onderdel bepaald. De voortgang voor de periode tot 2011 en daarna (2020) zal jaarlijks worden gemonitord door ECN, het planbureau voor de leefomgeving en SenterNovem. Belangrijk aandachtspunt is daarbij de vraag of de economische ontwikkelingen (met verslechterd investeringsklimaat en verminderde innovatiekracht van invloed zijn op de uitvoering van de sectorakkoorden. Om tegenwicht te bieden aan het verslechterde economische klimaat heeft het kabinet het thema duurzaamheid (met name klimaat en energie) nadrukkelijk onderdeel gemaakt van het stimuleringspakket van het aanvullende beleidsakkoord ‘Werken aan de toekomst’. Vooral duurzame energie en energiebesparing in de gebouwde omgeving (inclusief scholen en zorginstellingen) krijgen door dit pakket een belangrijke impuls.”

<sup>351</sup> Source: *Bigboard*, May 2009. PowerPoint presentation of Accountability Report 2008. Original text in Dutch: “De overheid wil uiterlijk in 2010 duurzaamheid als zwaarwegend criterium meenemen in al haar aankopen. Op het Big Board is dit beleidsdoel ‘rood’: de realisatie van dit beleidsdoel ligt niet op koers. De voortgang van dit beleidsdoel ligt niet op koers omdat de voorgenomen doelen voor 2008 (duurzaamheidscriteria voor tenminste 75% van de productgroepen) niet volledig zijn gerealiseerd (realisatie is 49%). Inmiddels kan gemeld worden dat de vertraging in de realisatie over 2008 op het onderdeel duurzaamheidscriteria in het eerste kwartaal van 2009 geheel is ingelopen. Daarmee ligt deze doelstelling bij een volgende meting weer op koers.”

to depend on energy suppliers abroad. The VVD had no faith in the cabinet energy policies whatsoever. Then the VVD spokesman expressed a critical remark concerning Cramer's financial management; the cabinet reserved one million Euro for administrative costs that came with introducing a "wrapping tax," while research had shown that it was going to cost 53 million Euro. Furthermore, the VVD thought that the cabinet was planning to agree with an EU proposal to force all firms to pay their CO2 emissions, no matter how eco-friendly the firm operated. The party spokesman stated that some eco-friendly companies would not be able to fight the competition because of their expenses on sustainability.

The party *Groen Links* (Green Left) was in disbelief about Cramer's progress and even blamed the cabinet minister personally. This is uncommon, as it did not happen to any of the other selected cabinet ministers during any of the Accountability Days in May 2009 or 2010: "The number one ambition of the cabinet minister, the project Clean and Sparing, failed. If this keeps going on, the cabinet minister herself is going to fail."<sup>352</sup>

The spokesperson argued that the cabinet did not deserve the 8.2 grade it gave itself. A 4.5 would be more fitting, according to Groen Links. Cramer's coordinating and ambassador job for a greener government was failing as well, according to Groen Links. She should have stimulated the cabinet ministers responsible for traffic, public transportation, finance, economy, water management, and agriculture to come up with green alternatives for their pollution-causing policies.

The CU stated that Cramer's goals might have been unrealistic and too much focused on the long run. The party spokesman asked the cabinet to pay special attention to the goals that

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<sup>352</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: Verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.



were not on track: “Since the government has become an important client to the financial sector, sustainability should have been a deal breaker in all public purchases.”<sup>353</sup> Later in the debate, he stated that “stimulating public transport would have been much greener than stimulating road traffic.”<sup>354</sup>

According to another party, D66, the Planning Bureau for Life Environment had stated that the cabinet did not undertake sufficient action to meet (international) climate and energy goals. The spokesperson argued that this expert bureau was much less happy with the cabinet progress than the cabinet itself. The party spokesperson doubted that the efforts Cramer put into her policies would be enough to solve problems and offer any perspective for the future.

The PvdD spokesperson stated that “cabinet minister Jacqueline Cramer proudly presents a budget to test CO2 storage underground. This costs 60 million Euro and it is purely a prevention strategy to cover the symptoms of our problems, instead of a real solution.”<sup>355</sup> The spokesperson accused the cabinet minister of operating against the advice of both the Planning Bureau for Life Environment and the World Health Organization: “The cabinet should not accept the ‘fact’ that an economic recession will influence the climate goals negatively.” At the end of her speech, she accused Cramer of lacking a sense of urgency and vision on the increase of the water level and the consequences that this will have for the nation. One party expressed a small positive comment on Cramer’s work: “the action plan for housing was a good step forward.”<sup>356</sup>

In sum, nearly every party within the Parliament expressed worries about Cramer’s portfolio and her progress. All parties brought up questions and remarks about sustainability and

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<sup>353</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

<sup>354</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

<sup>355</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

<sup>356</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

the topics of climate, energy and the environment. When it was the Prime Minister's turn to respond to everything that had been said by the Parliament members, he started with Cramer's portfolio. He told the Parliament that the unrealized policy goals of 2008 would be realized in 2010.<sup>357</sup>

But that did not convince the parliamentarians: "Why did Jacqueline Cramer not come to an agreement on the so-called 'covenant IPO' with the corporate partners?"<sup>358</sup> According to the Prime Minister, this was the only element of Project 4 that provided grounds for the "not on track" status. Otherwise, it concerned climate goals and included ways to make traffic more eco-friendly. The Parliament did not budge. According to several political parties, at least five other aspects of the project were not on track, and members of the Parliament wanted to know exactly how bad it was. The Prime Minister promised that he would ask cabinet minister Cramer to react later in a separate debate, because the questions were too detailed to be answered directly. He did not say that the cabinet minister had everything under control, which is what he did when he responded on parliamentary comments on the work of some of the other cabinet ministers.<sup>359</sup> Instead, he promised to consider this the first and most important topic of debate during the weekly cabinet minister's council (in Dutch: *cabinet ministerraad*), which would take place the next morning after Accountability Day.

**Second Additional Source: Parliament's Comments and Concerns in May 2010 on the Accountability Report of 2009.** At the time of Accountability Day in May 2010, the Balkenende IV cabinet had not yet resigned, but the demissionary cabinet ministers still had to

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<sup>357</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

<sup>358</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

<sup>359</sup> Source: Accountability debate (in Dutch: "verantwoordingsdebat"), May 28, 2009, TK 89 89-6918.

account for the work they did in 2009. Cramer had not realized all of her goals in 2009. The environment in general, and Project 4 (Clean and Sparing) in particular, were important topics of the parliamentary debate in 2010. When it comes to Cramer's portfolio, there was a lot of strong criticism and disappointment from opposition parties. Coalition parties PvdA and CDA also noticed that goals were not realized by the Balkenende IV cabinet. The CDA spokesperson mainly blamed the complexity of society, unrealistic goals and overly ambitious planning: "My last topic for today will be climate policies. The main problem is that the goals have been too ambitious. They sound great, but they should be realistic in a complex society."<sup>360</sup>

GroenLinks blamed the cabinet, not the goals: "The less ambitious goals, the European ones, for example, have not been realized either. So it has not much to do with goals, but with a complete lack of ambition of this Cabinet."<sup>361</sup> Furthermore, a PvdA spokesperson tried to address criticism towards PvdA-cabinet minister Jacqueline Cramer personally. When GroenLinks stated that "project-Jacqueline Cramer" has failed,<sup>362</sup> the PvdA spokesperson replied:

I wouldn't say that. I do admit that the Cabinet was unable to realize all goals we formulated. The reason for this, is that we believed too much in making agreements [with

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<sup>360</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 2009." Quote: De heer Van Geel (CDA): "Ik kom aan het slot van mijn betoog nog toe aan het klimaatbeleid. Ik constateer dat het grote probleem is – ik heb dat reeds in algemene zin gezegd – dat er hier heel ambitieuze doelstellingen worden geformuleerd. Die klinken wel heel goed, maar moeten ook gerealiseerd worden in een complexe samenleving."

<sup>361</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 2009": Mevrouw Halsema (GroenLinks): "Het is goed dat u daarop ingaat. Wij kunnen echter vaststellen dat de niet ambitieuze doelstellingen, bijvoorbeeld de Europese, ook bijlange na niet gehaald worden. Het heeft dus niet zo veel te maken met de doelstellingen, maar met een volstrekt gebrek aan ambitie van dit kabinet."

<sup>362</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 200." Quote: Halsema (GL): "Wij kunnen toch gewoon vaststellen dat het project-Jacqueline Cramer in dit aller-allerlaatste kabinet-Balkenende is mislukt? Bij de evaluatie van Schoon en Zuinig is gebleken dat dit kabinet tekortschiet op alle doelen die het zichzelf gesteld heeft."

stakeholders] and not enough in regulation. This was not just Jacqueline Cramer's fault.

If we're going to call names, I'm not afraid to name Van der Hoeven [Cabinet Minister of Economic Affairs]. ... We can't turn back time. We did all we could do.<sup>363</sup>

Unfortunately for the PvdA, this comment may have made the image of Cramer worse, because it gave the Groen Links spokesperson ammunition to claim that Cabinet Minister Cramer 'indeed' gave all her power away to Cabinet Minister Van der Hoeven.<sup>364</sup>

Last but not least, the PvdA expressed fundamental criticism of the cabinet when it comes to Cramer's portfolio:

The cabinet has quite a lot to account for when it comes to [the work done in] 2009.

The cabinet has not taken any additional initiative after the Planning Bureau for the Life environment made clear that the environment goals were not being met. ... For how long can we ignore [these important institutes] when they indicate that there are some severe problems that require urgent attention?<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 2009." Hamer (PvdA): "Ik geloof dat u nu echt een vertekend beeld geeft. Ik zou zeker niet willen zeggen dat het project-Jacqueline Cramer is mislukt. Wij kunnen wel constateren – daar ben ik eerlijk over – dat het in het afgelopen kabinet onvoldoende is gelukt om alle doelen die wij hadden, te realiseren. Ik heb daar ook een reden voor gegeven. Er is te veel geloofd in het maken van afspraken via convenanten en te weinig in de normstelling. Dat was overigens niet alleen de schuld van mevrouw Jacqueline Cramer. Als wij namen van bewindslieden moeten gaan noemen, durf ik ook wel de naam Van der Hoeven te noemen. U weet dat ook. We kunnen de klok niet meer terugdraaien. We hebben gedaan wat we konden."

<sup>364</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 2009." Halsema (GroenLinks): "We zijn het erover eens dat minister Jacqueline Cramer inderdaad al haar macht op het terrein van milieu heeft overgedragen aan minister Van der Hoeven. Mevrouw Hamer (PvdA): Dat heb ik niet gezegd."

<sup>365</sup> Original text in Dutch: "Verantwoordingsdebat Jaarverslagen en slotwetten 2009." Mevrouw Thieme (PvdD): "Als wij kijken naar het jaar 2009, heeft het kabinet nogal wat te verantwoorden. Er zijn namelijk geen extra maatregelen genomen nadat het Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving duidelijk had gemaakt dat de milieudoelen niet werden gehaald. Er zijn ook geen extra maatregelen genomen nadat duidelijk werd dat er een vertraging tot stand was gekomen in de zonne-energie- en windenergiesector. Daarnaast zijn er geen extra maatregelen genomen om de banken krediet te laten verlenen aan de duurzame sector. (...) Mevrouw Hamer zegt: wij zijn niet helemaal tevreden over wat we in 2009 hebben kunnen doen ten aanzien van milieu en klimaat. Het Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving is daarin nog veel stilliger. We halen gewoon de milieudoelen niet. Hoe lang kunnen we instituten als het

In sum, on the last Accountability Day of Cramer's term as Cabinet Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Parliament was left behind with their concerns, dissatisfaction, and criticism toward the cabinet for not realizing important policy goals with which Cramer started in 2007. The parliamentary debate on May 2010 shows that, according to certain members of Parliament, Cramer even lacked the ability to complete her task successfully.

**Jacqueline Cramer's Policy Performance: Final Remarks.** Based on previously discussed information, the conclusion of this paragraph is that Cramer's policy goal realization was relatively flawed. Whether that is due to the difficulty of her portfolio or to a lack of performance remains unknown. But the data have shown a cabinet minister who had trouble convincing both the media and Parliament that she had her policy portfolio under control. The next chapter discusses the performance of an MPC cabinet minister in the Balkenende IV cabinet: Guusje ter Horst. How to understand public credibility based on the investigation of the two LPC cases will be discussed in the general conclusions of this dissertation.

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Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving nog negeren – ach ja, we moeten misschien nog wel een tandje bijzetten□– terwijl die onafhankelijke instituten zeggen dat het water ons aan de lippen staat?”

## Chapter 16: Guusje ter Horst

When the respondents of the LISS panel were interviewed in January 2009, Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations between 2007 and 2010, had been able to create a fair amount of public credibility: She ended up in the middle of the credibility ranking in 2009 and 2010 (see Part II). Her perceived honesty was 61.1% and her perceived reliability was 65.3% (compared to over 70% for the HPC cabinet ministers). With only 56% of LISS panel respondents who considered her competent, this seemed to be the weakest link in her credibility profile.

Before she became Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in 2007, Ter Horst was an experienced local politician. She was admired for her work as a mayor in Nijmegen, a city near the eastern border of the Netherlands. Guusje ter Horst was affiliated with the PvdA, at the time led by Vice Prime Cabinet Minister Wouter Bos.

Guusje ter Horst's case is interesting because it shows a cabinet minister in the middle of the credibility ranking. There was room for improvement, but also room for a decrease of credibility, which is what happened: Guusje ter Horst's public credibility went from 61% in January 2009 to 53.5% in January 2010. This chapter is an attempt to understand why she was an MPC cabinet minister, and not a higher- or lower-credibility cabinet minister.

**Communicated Personality Profile—Guusje ter Horst.** In this paragraph, the MIDC will be applied to Ter Horst as a cabinet minister. The sources used to gather information about Ter Horst are mostly newspaper articles, some of which contain quotes spoken by people who were interviewed by the journalist about the cabinet minister. Guusje ter Horst will be displayed as a colleague, a boss, a politician, a cabinet minister, and a friend. Eventually, her

communicated personality patterns will be used to understand her medium public credibility better. For an extended discussion of the methods used in this paragraph, see Part IV.

Guusje ter Horst was affiliated with the PvdA party, led by Vice Prime Minister Wouter Bos. In the beginning of her term, she was described as “relaxed as a veteran, even though she was never a cabinet minister before.”<sup>366</sup> She appeared confident (MIDC criterion A2a) and poised (D2a). Throughout her term, the source materials contained many compliments about the assertive way she addressed parliamentarians. Some newspaper journalists seemed to take pleasure in observing her in action and observed that “Ter Horst is not afraid to lecture parliamentarians.”<sup>367</sup> Also, “the willingness with which [Ter Horst] treats some parliamentarians may just turn into acrimony, as D66 parliamentarian Fatma Koser Kaya has experienced. ‘Maybe there is not enough urgency for you to listen to me’ [Ter Horst said].”<sup>368</sup> Ter Horst was at times a bit sarcastic, for example as follows: “‘Perhaps the Minister should rethink her attitude,’ said SP parliamentarian Ronald van Raak. Ter Horst: ‘I thank Mr Van Raak for his very therapeutic advice. I will think about that deeply, at a more suitable moment.’”<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> *Nederlands Dagblad*, December 1, 2007. Original text in Dutch: “Ter Horst staat er gedurende het debat bij met de ontspannenheid van een routinier, hoewel zij nooit eerder minister was, wel burgemeester (van Nijmegen). Ze zit niet vast aan haar tekst op papier en leunt, met haar armen over elkaar, iets voorover op het kathedraal.”

<sup>367</sup> *Nederlands Dagblad*, December 1, 2007. Original text in Dutch: “Van een verkapt preekje is Ter Horst ook niet afkerig, blijkt als zij ingaat op een vraag van PVV-Kamerlid Hero Brinkman naar overlastgevende Marokkaanse jongeren. ‘Ik las in de krant een heel interessant stuk, waarin werd gesteld dat je dit niet etnisch moet benoemen, maar dat het gaat om jongeren die zich de straatcultuur hebben eigen gemaakt.’ Daar kon Brinkman het mee doen, zij het dat hij al snel weer terug is achter de interruptiemicrofoon.”

<sup>368</sup> *Nederlands Dagblad*, December 1, 2007. Original text in Dutch: “De welwillendheid waarmee zij sommige parlementariërs bejegt, kan zomaar omslaan in bitsheid, zo ervaart onder andere D66-Kamerlid Fatma Koser Kaya. ‘Misschien is er bij u niet genoeg urgentie om naar mij te luisteren.’ Wie kaatst kan de bal verwachten, want vervolgens spreekt Ter Horst over de ‘kerstvakantie’ van de Kamer. Ze krijgt er een tik voor op de vingers van Verbeet: ‘Wij hebben hier geen vakantie, wel reces,’ aldus de Kamervoorzitter.”

<sup>369</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original Text in Dutch: “‘Misschien moet de minister eens nadenken over haar houding,’ stelde SP’er Ronald van Raak. Ter Horst: ‘Ik dank de heer Van Raak zeer voor zijn therapeutisch advies. Ik zal daar op een moment dat daar meer geschikt voor is, diep over nadenken.’ Hero Brinkman (PVV) vond ook dat er wat schortte aan het respect van de minister voor de politie. Ter Horst: ‘Ik weet

With her authoritative way of addressing parliamentarians, and her reported forcefulness and impatience in trying to solve problems, Ter Horst appeared dominant (scale 1A). With her lack of nervousness, her poise and her confidence, she appeared ambitious (scale 2). And with her oppositional way of debating, she appeared contentious (scale 5B). This paragraph addresses the question how this communicated personality profile helps to understand her medium public credibility.

**Sources and the Process of Analysis.** To diagnose Ter Horst's communicated personality pattern, 180 articles published between January 2008 and February 2010 were scanned and 44 articles were analyzed and labeled following the rules of the MIDC method (Immelman, 2004). The articles, as published in newspapers and magazines, were published during the 3 years after the start of the cabinet in 2007 and before the last credibility measurement took place, which was right after the cabinet resigned in February 2010.

All quotes from the articles will be discussed in this paragraph and in Appendix 24. Each quote will be accompanied by an endnote that reveals the newspaper, publication date and the original text in Dutch. The score sheet in Table 35 was used to diagnose Ter Horst's communicated personality by means of the adapted MIDC.

Table 35

*MIDC Score Sheet Guusje ter Horst: Communicated Personality between January 2008 and February 2010.*

Written sources.

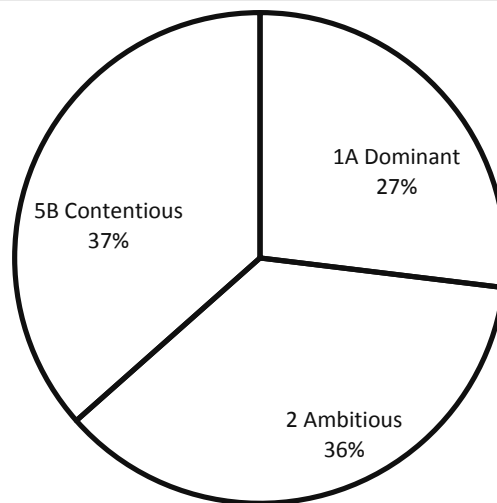
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ook niet of het nu aan de PVV is om leden van dit kabinet op het matje te roepen als het gaat om houding en respect.””



	Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2007–2010								
	A1 - Dominant			2 - Ambitious			5B – Contentious		
Gradation Points	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	C
A	1	2		1	2	3	1	2	
B	1	2		1	2		1	2	
C	1			1	2		1		
D	1			1			1	2	3
E	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
52 RAW	14			19			19		
100 %	26.9 %			36.5 %			36.5 %		

## Guusje ter Horst: written sources



*Figure 29.* MIDC pie chart for Guusje ter Horst’s communicated personality between 2008 and 2010, based on written sources (press articles) and data from Table 35.<sup>370</sup>

**Results of MIDC Analysis: Ter Horst’s Communicated Personality Patterns.** Guusje ter Horst’s communicated personality profile as it showed up from the source materials will be discussed below, based on the analysis by means of the MIDC (Immelman, 2004). Does Ter Horst’s communicated personality profile help to understand why she was unable to attain higher public credibility during her term? She did attain more credibility than Cramer or Van Middelkoop did. What did she have that the LPC cabinet ministers were lacking? A few answers can be given based on the score sheet in Table 35.

<sup>370</sup> How to read Figure 29. The score sheet only shows the cells (attribute domains and scales/patterns) in which Ter Horst’s communicated personality is present. Each of the 45 MIDC criteria represents a feature (characteristic) of the target person’s communicated personality. For example, the second, top left criterion stands for “forceful” and will be referred to as A1Ab (attribute A refers to expressive behavior, scale 1A is the dominant pattern, gradation b is the second gradation: Ter Horst’s communicated personality shows 2 points for this criterion (Immelman, 2004). The bottom row shows the percentage of points Ter Horst’s communicated personality gets on each scale (pattern). For example, on scale 1A, the dominant pattern, Ter Horst gets 14 RAW points, which represents 26.9% of her communicated personality profile.

Ter Horst's most present communicated personality patterns were the ambitious-confident-self-serving pattern (scale 2), and the contentious-resolute-oppositional pattern (scale 5B). Both patterns occupied 36.5% of Ter Horst's communicated personality profile. These first pattern was associated with higher public credibility (in the case of Ronald Plasterk); however, it was found in a communicated personality profile among other, stronger patterns (scale 1B, the dauntless pattern and scale 3, the outgoing pattern). Evidence for these patterns was not found in Ter Horst's communicated personality profile. Plasterk softened up the ambitious pattern with a more sociable side of his communicated personality profile, while Ter Horst communicated none of the softer patterns in the source materials.

The third personality pattern Ter Horst communicated through the source materials was the dominant pattern (scale 1A, 26.9%). This pattern was associated with higher public credibility in the case of Hirsch Ballin, but he combined it with conscientious patterns, which most likely attributed to his reliable image.

With only strong leadership patterns (scale 1A and scale 2), and an oppositional pattern (scale 5B), Ter Horst made it to the middle-upper part of the credibility ranking, and her perceived competence was much higher than that of most other cabinet ministers. The discussion of her communicated personality profile supports two previously drawn hypotheses:

- a communicated personality profile seems to influence a minister's public credibility (of which perceived competence is one variable);
- without any scale 3 (the outgoing pattern, which is linked to a cabinet minister's sociable behavior) or scale 6 (which is linked to a cabinet minister's dutiful-respectful-reliable behavior), it may be difficult to develop higher public credibility.

**The strength of Evidence and Range of Personality Types.** When patterns are strongly present within the target person's personality profile (between 15 and 24 raw MIDC points), this would "suggest maladaptively exaggerated features" (Immelman, 2004, p. 16). As discussed throughout this dissertation, the MIDC results are being interpreted differently. The aim of this dissertation is not to diagnose a target person (Guusje ter Horst as Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations between 2007 and 2010), but to diagnose an image. It is not to diagnose a *biographic* personality, but to diagnose a *communicated* personality. In 2008, 2009, and early 2010, Ter Horst's communicated personality profile (her MIDC personality as communicated through Dutch newspapers), existed of two highly present communicated personality patterns: scale 2 (the ambitious pattern) and scale 5B (the contentious pattern). These patterns have the highest scores in Table 35 because the quotes from the source materials refer to criteria from the first, second, and third gradation (a, b, and c in Table 35).

On both scale 2 and scale 5B, the ambitious and contentious pattern, Ter Horst's communicated personality has 19 points, which means there would be "robust evidence for a Level III personality type; the basic personality type is prominent," but only if the justification of "identification at the third level (scored 3 points) in all five attribute domains" would be met (Immelman, 2004, p. 16). This is not the case. Instead, there is identification at the first level in all five attribute domains. According to Immelman (2004), "identification of a criterion at the first level (scored 1 point) in all five attribute domains of a given personality pattern provides convincing evidence for the existence of the personality type associated with those criteria" (p. 15). This means that in the case of Ter Horst, there is "robust evidence for a level I [communicated] personality type; the basic [communicated] personality pattern is present and well within the normal range" (Immelman, 2004, p. 15, adaptations by EW).

Table 36

*Overview of Guusje ter Horst's Personality Profile*

Scale	Attributes	Points	Evidence	Level	Diagnosis
Ambitious	A, B, C, D, E	19	Robust	I	Normal range
Contentious	A, B, C, D, E	19	Robust	I	Normal range
Dominant	A, B, C, D, E	14	Robust	I	Normal range

**Discussion: The Dominant Pattern (Scale 1A).** Immelman (2004) explains that patterns can be present within the target person's personality in three different intensities. When it comes to the dominant pattern (scale 1A), "At the well-adjusted pole are strong-willed, commanding, assertive personalities" (p. 18). On scale 1A, the accommodating pattern, Ter Horst's communicated personality has 14 points. People who were reading newspaper articles about Ter Horst between 2007 and 2010 most likely learned that she was sometimes dominant, asserting, and possibly a little controlling:

She is known as a rock hard woman who doesn't let anyone steer her. As Cabinet Minister of the Interior, Guusje ter Horst goes straight through walls. The police needs to be turned upside down, trash families are being taken out of their houses without any further redo, and everyone has to commit to a contract on responsible citizenship. The PvdA-Minister is standing strong.<sup>371</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, A5Ba, nonconformist)

Immelman states that "slightly exaggerated Dominant features occur in forceful, intimidating, controlling personalities" (2004, p. 18). These qualities may be less admirable for a

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<sup>371</sup> *De Telegraaf*, December 21, 2008. Original text in Dutch: "Ze staat bekend als een keiharde tante die zich van niets en niemand wat aantrekt. Als minister van Binnenlandse Zaken gaat Guusje ter Horst dwars door muren heen. De politie moet volledig op de schop, asociale gezinnen worden zonder pardon uit hun woning gezet en iedereen moet aan een handvest verantwoordelijk burgerschap. De PvdA-bewindsvrouw staat haar mannetje."

cabinet minister. Unfortunately for Ter Horst and her media trainers, there were quite a few references in the source materials to her being forceful, intimidating, and controlling. For example: “After a relaxed Johan Remkes, the [Ministry of the] Interior has a boss who is on top of things: Guusje ter Horst. If you’re not securely grounded, she will walk all over you. ‘Intimidation. That’s her strategy’”<sup>372</sup> (B1Ab, intimidating).

Immelman (2004) continues to describe a more extreme side of the dominant pattern, to which, luckily for Ter Horst, none of the articles published between 2007 and 2010 referred: “In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the Dominant pattern [scale 1A] displays itself in domineering, belligerent, aggressive behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of sadistic personality disorder” (p. 18). However, the normal version of the dominant pattern seems to be a good fit for Ter Horst’s personality, as communicated through newspapers in the Netherlands when she was in office. In his manual, Immelman (2004, p. 19) refers to Oldham and Morris (1995, p. 345), who have described the normal prototype of the Dominant pattern as follows:

While others may aspire to leadership, Aggressive [Dominant] men and women move instinctively to the helm. They are born to assume command as surely as is the top dog in the pack. Theirs is a strong, forceful personality style, more inherently powerful than any of the others. They can undertake huge responsibilities without fear of failure. They wield power with ease. They never back away from a fight. They compete with the supreme confidence of champions. (Oldham & Morris, 1995, p. 345, with adaptations by Immelman, 2004, p. 19)

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<sup>372</sup> *De Volkskrant*, January 26, 2010. Original text in Dutch: “Na de ontspannen Johan Remkes heeft Binnenlandse Zaken nu een baas die erbovenop zit: Guusje ter Horst. Als je niet stevig in je schoenen staat, walst ze over je heen. ‘Intimideren. Dat is haar strategie.’”

The MIDC analysis has shown that Ter Horst communicated a lot of scale 1A behavior during her term as a cabinet minister, and that she has made an impression akin to Oldham and Morris's (1995) description of the dominant pattern. Some of the scale 1A features may have helped Ter Horst to come across as reliable, honest, and competent (credible), but other features may have caused credibility problems. After all, being intimidating and stern are features that could concern the audience. A cabinet minister who is being displayed as forceful and powerful could either increase or decrease the perceived reliability of a cabinet minister, depending on the circumstances.

A combination of the dominant pattern (1A) and the ambitious pattern (scale 2) was previously linked to higher public credibility in the case of Ernst Hirsch Ballin. This cabinet minister, who had one of the highest and most solid credibility profiles, combined both the dominant (scale 1A, 28%) and the ambitious pattern (scale 2, 12%) in his communicated personality profile. These patterns have most likely provided the foundation of his higher credibility, together with scale 6 (the conscientious pattern). In the case of Hirsch Ballin, the conscientious pattern was strongly present (48%), which was most likely the pattern that gave him a reliable image. Guusje ter Horst, who worked closely with cabinet minister Hirsch Ballin on policy goals concerning crime reduction and safety between 2007 and 2010, did not combine the dominant pattern (scale 1A) with the conscientious pattern (scale 6) in her communicated personality profile. There was no trace of any conscientious (scale 6) communicated behavior by Ter Horst. Furthermore, Hirsch Ballin was never referred to as "intimidating," but Ter Horst was twice. These elements may be some of the reasons Ter Horst was not a higher-credibility cabinet minister, while Hirsch Ballin was.

**Discussion: The Ambitious Pattern (Scale 2).** When it comes to the ambitious pattern (scale 2), “at the well-adjusted pole are confident, socially poised, assertive personalities” (Immelman, 2004). When most positive, descriptions of Ter Horst in the source materials fit the way Oldham and Morris typified the ‘normal prototype of the ambitious pattern: “Self-Confident men and women know what they want, and they get it. Many of them have the charisma to attract plenty of others to their goals. They are extroverted and intensely political” (1995, p. 85; see also Immelman, 2004, p. 27).

This is indeed how Ter Horst came across in some quotes from the source materials. Many of the quotes in Appendix 24 show a cabinet minister who was seemingly unafraid to stand alone in a debate or be disliked by colleagues or other people she dealt with professionally. The newspaper articles rarely showed any nervousness. Guusje ter Horst usually appeared calm and poised: “Businesslike, competent, a good debater, charming. But also stern, sometimes pushy, impatient, arrogant [and] indiscreet. She awakens both admiration and annoyance in parliamentarians”<sup>373</sup> (B1Aa, authoritative, A2a, confident, A1Aa, b, commanding, forceful, B2b, entitled, E2a, b, confident, admirable, A3a, sociable, A2c, arrogant).

However, the source materials did contain stories about Ter Horst where she was reportedly angry and lost her patience because, as the newspaper suggested, she felt like she was being treated unfairly (with similarities to Millon’s complaining pattern, 1994a, p. 34). For example:

Cabinet Minister Guusje ter Horst left a parliament committee meeting for Internal

Affairs on Wednesday. The incident happened when the committee decided that the also

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<sup>373</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Zakelijk, competent, een goed debater, charmant. Maar ook star, soms drammerig, ongeduldig, arrogant, loslippig. Bij de Kamerleden die haar controleren roept Guusje ter Horst een mengeling van bewondering en ergernis op.”



present cabinet minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin of Justice would answer first, because he had to attend another meeting that day. Guusje ter Horst disagreed. She closed her organizer and said angrily: 'I'm not sitting here for nothing' and left the room. (...) Committee chairman John Leerdam (PvdA) postponed the meeting and went after the cabinet minister. A moment later Guusje ter Horst came back, causing parliamentarians to mumble unsatisfactorily.<sup>374</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, D5Ba/b/c, moody, irritable, disgruntled, E5Ba/b/c, dissatisfied, discontented, disillusioned)

Immelman (2004) continues: "Slightly exaggerated Ambitious features occur in personalities that are sometimes perceived as self-promoting, overconfident, or arrogant" (p. 26). Unfortunately for Ter Horst, she was called both self-promoting and arrogant in several Dutch newspapers:

Cabinet Minister Guusje ter Horst is stuck in a salary negotiations conflict with the police. She (...) is getting little support from the Parliament. Parliamentarians sympathize with the police agents. Campaigning police agents are calling her 'Mrs. Kesler'. It's a reference to director Henk Kesler of the soccer union KNVB, who referred to officers on strike as 'those spoiled lads'. Cabinet Minister Guusje ter Horst of the Interior is risking to lose all respect from the police."<sup>375</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, A2b, conceited, A2c, arrogant, B2b, entitled)

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<sup>374</sup> *De Volkskrant*, September 3, 2009. Original text in Dutch: "Den Haag cabinet minister Guusje ter Horst is woensdag boos weggelopen uit een overleg met de Kamercommissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken. Het incident gebeurde toen de commissie besloot dat de eveneens aanwezige minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin van Justitie eerst zou antwoorden, omdat hij naar een andere afspraak moest. Guusje ter Horst was het daar niet mee eens. Ze klapte haar map dicht en brieste: 'Ik zit hier niet voor piet snot' en beende het zaaltje uit.' (...) Commissievoorzitter John Leerdam (PvdA) schorste de vergadering om de minister te zoeken en terug te halen. Even later kwam Guusje ter Horst weer binnen, onder afkeurend gemompel van de Kamerleden."

<sup>375</sup> *Het Financieele Dagblad*, February 2, 2008. Original text in Dutch: "Cabinet minister Guusje ter Horst zit klem in het cao-conflict met de politie. Zij heeft de hoge eisen zelf uitgelokt en krijgt weinig steun van de Kamer. Die sympathiseert met de agenten. Onder actievoerende politieagenten wordt zij al 'mevrouw Kesler' genoemd. Een

Immelman (2004, p. 27) quotes Millon (1994a, p. 32) in his manual to provide deeper insight into the ambitious pattern. Millon calls this pattern the “asserting” pattern and has described it as follows:

An interpersonal boldness, stemming from a belief in themselves and their talents, characterize[s] those high on the . . . Asserting [Ambitious] scale. Competitive, ambitious, and self assured, they naturally assume positions of leadership, act in a decisive and unwavering manner, and expect others to recognize their special qualities and cater to them.

This seems to fit Ter Horst’s communicated personality profile well, as becomes clear in both of the following quotes:

[Many] think that Guusje ter Horst needs to learn that a cabinet minister needs to seduce, not command. Fellow party member and parliamentarian Lea Bouwmeester: “I admire what she does. But she should develop a better feel for what parliamentarians want. She seeks confrontation. She can be arrogant. She will say: ‘I have talked with people in this country, I know what they want’. Like parliamentarians don’t [have those talks with citizens].”<sup>376</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, A1Ab, forceful, C1Aa, stern, B1Aa, authoritative, A2a, confident, B2a, self-asserting, E2a, confident, A5Bb, resistant, B5Ba, unyielding)

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verwijzing naar directeur Henk Kesler van de voetbalbond KNVB die de stakende dienders wegzette als ‘die verwende kereltjes.’ Cabinet minister Guusje ter Horst van Binnenlandse Zaken dreigt het respect van de politie geheel te verliezen.”

<sup>376</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Guusje ter Horst moet leren, vinden niet alleen politieke tegenstanders, dat een minister moet verleiden, niet bevelen. Partijgenoot en Tweede Kamerlid Lea Bouwmeester: ‘Ik heb heel veel bewondering voor wat ze doet. Maar ze zou meer gevoel kunnen ontwikkelen voor wat Kamerleden willen. Ze is erg van de confrontatie. Ze is soms arrogant. Dan zegt ze: ik heb met mensen in het land gesproken, ik weet hoe ze denken. Alsof Kamerleden dat niet zelf ook doen.’”

(...) she moves like people describe her: decisive, quick, a little impatient.<sup>377</sup> (B2a, self-asserting, B2b, entitled)

Millon (1994a) continues to describe the asserting profile (ambitious pattern) as follows:

Beyond being self confident, those with an Asserting profile often are audacious, clever, and persuasive, having sufficient charm to win others over to their own causes and purposes. Problematic in this regard may be their lack of social reciprocity and their sense of entitlement—their assumption that what they wish for is their due. (Millon 1994a, p. 32; see also Immelman, 2004, p. 27).

If this is the image readers of Dutch newspapers developed of Guusje ter Horst during her term, it may be one of the elements that helps to understand why she was in the middle range of the credibility ranking: She exuded enough of the ambitious pattern (scale 2) to fuel an image of cleverness and charm (which was often mentioned in the source materials, see Appendix 24), but also awakened a sense of suspicion in the audience. Her communicated entitlement may have lowered the belief of the LISS panel respondents in her reliability and honesty. At the end of the following quote, a journalist comes to the conclusion that Guusje ter Horst preferred to make decisions on her own. The quote shows that sense of entitlement Millon referred to:

Does she like doing her work? Sure, she hurries to say, and starts raving about the “collegial atmosphere” in the Cabinet. About the “ten priorities” that she and her State Secretary Ank Bijleveld have prepared for this term. And about the debates in the House: “I always look forward to them.” ... But sometimes she gets annoyed by the hype-

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<sup>377</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 15, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Ze beweegt zoals ze vaak omschreven wordt: kordaat, snel, een beetje ongeduldig.”

culture, the lack of factual knowledge and the tone of the debate. She is much more a governor than a politician. Her expectations were shaped by her experience as an alderman in Amsterdam, where governing persons are accustomed to little opposition and almost absolute power. “Guusje,” says a fellow cabinet minister, “would prefer to just make decisions. Doing coalition things, giving and taking: it’s really not for her.”<sup>378</sup>

(A1Aa, commanding, A1Ab, forceful, B1Aa, authoritative, A2a, confident, B2a, self-asserting, B2b, entitled, A5Ba, nonconformist, A5Bb, resistant, B5Ba, unyielding)

In these source materials, Guusje ter Horst made the impression that she preferred other cabinet ministers and parliamentarians to be rather accommodating, so she could make decisions quickly and efficiently.

Last but not least, Millon (1994a) continues to describe the ambitious (scale 2) personality type, and points out that “on the other hand, their ambitions often succeed, and they typically prove to be effective leaders” (p. 32; see also Immelman, 2004, p. 27). And indeed, some of the parliamentarians who were quoted on the source materials admired Ter Horst’s style:

Among parliamentarians the verdict is unanimous: A debate with Ter Horst is always beautiful, sharp, and provocative. Everyone, including the audience, is better off when it’s over. According to D66 chairman Alexander Pechtold, Ter Horst has yet improved her attitude when addressing Parliament. “In the beginning, she would say things like: ‘if

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<sup>378</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 15, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Bevalt haar werk verder wel? Zeker, haast ze zich te zeggen, en begint enthousiast over de ‘collegiale sfeer’ in het kabinet. Over de ‘tien prioriteiten’ die zij en haar staatssecretaris Ank Bijleveld hebben opgesteld voor deze regeerperiode. En over de debatten in de Tweede Kamer: ‘Daar verheug ik me op.’ Verheugen? Laten we nou net gehoord hebben dat Guusje ter Horst in kleine kring weleens bedenkingen uit over hoe het in de Kamer gaat. Dat ze zich soms ergert aan de hype-cultuur, de gebrekkige dossierkennis en de toon van het debat. Dat ze veel meer bestuurder dan politica is. Gevormd door haar wethouderschap in Amsterdam, waar PvdA-bestuurders gewend zijn aan weinig oppositie en bijna absolute macht. ‘Guusje,’ vertelt een collega-minister, ‘zou het liefste alleen maar knopen doorhakken. Coalitiedingen doen, geven en nemen: het is eigenlijk niets voor haar.’”

you're a real man...' She has learned not to do that anymore"<sup>379</sup> (A2a, confident, B2a, self-asserting, E2a, confident, E2a, admirable, C5Ba, freethinking).

**Discussion: The Contentious Pattern (Scale 5B).** The contentious pattern is one of the most present patterns in Ter Horst's communicated personality profile (36%). It is also one of the trickier patterns of the MIDC when it comes to compatibility with leadership and leadership image. It may have harmed Guusje ter Horst's credibility, as the contentious pattern (scale 5B) refers to personalities that are "cynical, headstrong [and] resolute" if they are well-adjusted (Immelman, 2004, p. 40).

Guusje ter Horst communicated some contentious, resolute, and oppositional features as a cabinet minister (MIDC scale 5B; see Immelman, 2004). According to Millon, people with contentious patterns (he refers to the "complaining pattern"), communicate "that they have been treated unfairly, that little of what they have done has been appreciated, and that they have been blamed for things that they did not do" (Millon, 1994a, p. 34; see also Immelman, 2004, p. 40). The introductory quote about Ter Horst below shows that Millon's description fits her communicated personality well.

To us, the European election [outcome] felt like a slap in the face. The PvdA has lost more than half of all voters. You can say: it was only a European election. But if we had won, that excuse wouldn't have been used. What worries me is the large number of citizens that says: I like the PVV ideology. Or: I'm sick of this cabinet. Well, I happen to be a member of that cabinet and such comments hurt me deeply. People think that we are

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<sup>379</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: "Onder Kamerleden is het oordeel unaniem: een debat met Guusje ter Horst is altijd mooi, scherp en provocerend. Iedereen, ook de toeschouwer, komt er beter uit. Volgens D66-fractievoorzitter Alexander Pechtold heeft Guusje ter Horst haar houding in de Kamer al wel wat aangepast. In het begin zei ze dingen als: 'Als u nou een vent bent....' Dat heeft ze zichzelf afgeleerd."

here to better ourselves. Where do they get this idea? This cabinet is busy solving the problems of the Netherlands. We spend a lot of time and energy doing that. [So] when people say it's all crap, it's not very motivating.<sup>380</sup> (E5Ba, dissatisfied, E5Bb, discontented, E5Bc, disillusioned)

On the brighter side, a combination of the ambitious (scale 2) and contentious (scale 5-B) communicated personality patterns made Ter Horst appear like a strong debater: confident, self-asserting, entitled, and poised on one hand, nonconformist, unyielding, and freethinking on the other.<sup>381</sup> At times, her energy seemed to be fueled by her dissatisfaction about political and social topics.

Immelman continues describing the three levels of the contentious pattern as follows: Exaggerated Contentious features occur in complaining, irksome, oppositional personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form, the Contentious pattern displays itself in caustic, contrary, negativistic behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of negativistic or passive-aggressive personality disorder. (2004, p. 40)

The source materials dated between 2008 and 2010 show that Ter Horst's communicated contentious pattern can be diagnosed between "mild" and "slightly exaggerated." The source materials have not provided any evidence for Ter Horst displaying "caustic," "contrary," or

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<sup>380</sup> *Vrij Nederland*, July 4, 2009. Original text in Dutch: "De Europese verkiezingen waren een klap in ons gezicht. De PvdA heeft meer dan de helft van haar kiezers verloren. Dan kun je wel zeggen: het waren maar Europese verkiezingen. Maar als we hadden gewonnen, was dat excuus niet gebruikt. Wat me vooral zorgen baart is het grote aantal Nederlanders dat nu opeens zegt: Het gedachtengoed van de PVV spreekt me enorm aan. Of: ik heb het helemaal gehad met dit kabinet. Nou, ik ben toevallig lid van dat kabinet en zulke opmerkingen raken me diep. Mensen denken kennelijk dat we hier ter meerdere eer en glorie van onszelf zitten. Hoe komen ze daarbij? Dit kabinet is bezig de problemen van Nederland op te lossen. We steken daar veel tijd en energie in. Als mensen dan zeggen dat het allemaal bagger is, motiveert dat niet echt."

<sup>381</sup> These MIDC criteria were described by Immelman in his manual in 2004.

“negativistic” behavior patterns in the same way Immelman (2004, p. 40) has described the deeply ingrained, inflexible form of the contentious pattern. In fact, some quotes have illustrated that Ter Horst communicated a light, fruitful version of the contentious pattern during her term as Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Her nonconformist, resistant communicated personality gave her the reputation of a strong negotiator. The following quote refers to her as a winner, and gave her a chance to channel opposition against criticism:

In recent weeks [Guusje ter Horst] fruitlessly negotiated with the police unions on a new collective agreement. This week, the negotiations were finally finished. ... the unions assume that Guusje ter Horst will not increase her offer. The cabinet minister seems to have won. But there is criticism as well. ... The unions are angry because the cabinet minister has imposed a dictation. Nonsense, thinks Guusje ter Horst: “I understand that people are frustrated about the process. I am too.”<sup>382</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, A1Ab, forceful, B1Aa, authoritative, B1Ab, intimidating, C1Aa, stern, E1Aa, assertive, A2a, confident, B2a, self-asserting, B2b, entitled, A5Ba, nonconformist, A5Bb, resistant, B5Ba, unyielding, E5Ba, dissatisfied)

Furthermore, Ter Horst often showed nonconformist behavior, which may have caused her to gain some credibility among anti-establishment followers. She was an experienced politician when she started as a cabinet minister, but she was new to the national government, and she did not always play by the rules of Parliament:

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<sup>382</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, March 15, 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Ellende lijkt de minister genoeg te hebben. De afgelopen weken onderhandelde ze vruchteloos met de politiebonden over een nieuwe cao. Deze week werden de besprekingen definitief afgebroken. Acties komen er niet meer, omdat de bonden ervan uitgaan dat Guusje ter Horst haar loonbod niet meer zal verhogen. Daarmee lijkt de minister de overwinnaar van het conflict. Maar er was ook kritiek. Bijvoorbeeld op de manier waarop ze onderhandelde. De bonden waren kwaad omdat de minister ze een dictaat zou hebben opgelegd. Onzin, vindt Guusje ter Horst: “Dat mensen gefrustreerd zijn over hoe het proces verlopen is, begrijp ik. Dat ben ik zelf ook.”

The willingness with which she approaches some parliamentarians, can flip into snappiness. This was what ... D66-member Fatma Koser Kaya experienced. “Maybe you don’t see the urgency to listen to me.” Those who play at bowls, must look out for rubs, because a minute later Guusje ter Horst speaks about the “Christmas vacation” of the parliament. She is being reprimanded by [the chairman]: “We don’t get Christmas vacation, we do get a recess.”<sup>383</sup> (A5Ba, nonconformist)

The source materials have shown that Ter Horst was liked by some and disliked by others. This was said in one of the inner-circle interviews as well. It reflects her credibility profile: During her term as a cabinet minister, she had more public credibility than did the LPC cabinet ministers, but lacked credibility to be in the top of the ranking, as discussed in Part II of this dissertation. The following quote was published in a Dutch newspaper, using a Dutch professor in politics, Meindert Fennema, as a source:

Like many others, Fennema admires her because she is self-willed. Guusje ter Horst dares to row up against the current. Where others tell voters what they want to hear, she will counter popular opinion. She was not guilt-conscious, but angry when voters cut the PvdA in half at the European elections. She dares to moralize, [talks] about things like decency and citizens who need to get a grip.<sup>384</sup> (A1Aa, commanding, A2a, confident,

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<sup>383</sup> *Nederlands Dagblad*, December 1, 2007. Original text in Dutch: “De welwillendheid waarmee zij sommige parlementariërs bejagent, kan zomaar omslaan in bitsheid, zo ervaart onder andere D66-Kamerlid Fatma Koser Kaya. ‘Misschien is er bij ú niet genoeg urgentie om naar mij te luisteren.’ Wie kaatst kan de bal verwachten, want vervolgens spreekt Guusje ter Horst over de ‘kerstvakantie’ van de Kamer. Ze krijgt er een tik voor op de vingers van Verbeet: ‘Wij hebben hier geen vakantie, wel reces,’ aldus de Kamervoorzitter.”

<sup>384</sup> *De Volkskrant*, January 26, 2010. Original text in Dutch: “Tussen hen kwam het goed. Net als veel andere gesprekspartners bewondert Fennema vooral haar eigenzinnigheid. Guusje ter Horst durft tegen de stroom in te roeien. Waar anderen de kiezer naar de mond praten, gaat zij soms dwars tegen hem in. Ze was niet schuld bewust, maar kwáád toen de kiezers de PvdA bij de Europese verkiezingen halveerden. Ze durft te moraliseren, over zaken als fatsoen en burgers die normaal moeten doen.”



A5Ba nonconformist, B5Ba, unyielding, B5Bb, obdurate, C5Ba, freethinking, D5Ba/b, moody/irritable, E5Ba, dissatisfied)

Another aspect of Ter Horst's contentious personality pattern possibly helped her to gain credibility as well, at least in the Parliament:

Even parliamentarians who have had the most inflamed discussions with her, say Guusje ter Horst never circles around a topic. SP-member Ronald van Raak: "She's not a twister, she has a strong opinion. It is a lot of fun to quarrel with Ter Horst."<sup>385</sup> (B1Aa, authoritative, A2a, confident, A5Bb, resistant, B5Ba, unyielding)

Although Ter Horst has likely built the image of a strong negotiator, a freethinker, a fresh nonconformist, and unyielding politician, the way she communicated contentious personality patterns may still have influenced her public credibility negatively. The following quote revealed her own dissatisfaction, discontent, and even disillusionment concerning the way national politics work. On getting things done on The Hague:

[Guusje ter Horst] explains that it took her some time to get used to her new position. She wants to be able to change things. But it often takes too long, which frustrates her. She also had to get used to the fact that things are done differently in The Hague than in a municipality. "When you're a mayor and you want change, you collect a few people and it happens. That's a world away from here."<sup>386</sup> (E5Ba, dissatisfied, E5Bb, discontented, E5Bc, disillusioned)

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<sup>385</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: "Ter Horst draait nooit om de zaken heen, zeggen ook Kamerleden die de felste woordenwisselingen met haar hebben. SP'er Ronald van Raak: 'Ze is geen draaikont, ze staat wel ergens voor. Het is ontzettend fijn ruziemaken met Ter Horst.'"

<sup>386</sup> *NRC Handelsblad*, December 22, 2008. Original text in Dutch: "Toch heeft ze aan die nieuwe positie erg moeten wennen, vertelt ze. Ze wil dingen kunnen veranderen. Maar het duurt vaak erg lang en soms raakt ze daardoor gefrustreerd. Ook heeft Guusje ter Horst moeten leren dat het er in Den Haag anders aan toegaat dan in een

**Guusje ter Horst's Communicated Personality Patterns: Final Remarks.** The two strong leadership patterns Guusje ter Horst communicated to the public (through the Dutch newspaper articles) between 2008 and 2010 (scale 1A and scale 2), seem to have increased her public credibility enough to end up in the middle range of the credibility ranking. Cabinet Minister Ter Horst managed to attain a fair amount of perceived reliability, honesty, and competence, but not enough to become a higher-credibility cabinet minister. Comparing her to other cases, it looks like she would have benefited from the communicated personality patterns that were associated with higher public credibility profiles in the previous chapter. Guusje ter Horst already had two useful patterns (scale 1A, the dominant pattern, just like Hirsch Ballin, and scale 2, the ambitious pattern, just like Hirsch Ballin and Plasterk).

The additional communicated personality patterns that were associated with higher public credibility were the outgoing pattern (scale 3) and the conscientious pattern (scale 6). Communicating scale 3 patterns worked for Plasterk because it gave him likeability, charm, and popularity. It seemed to soften up the other patterns present in his communicated personality profile.

Communicating scale 6 patterns worked for Hirsch Ballin because it gave him the image of a fair, hard-working and trustworthy cabinet minister with a strong sense of moral values. After researching five communicated personality profiles, the hypothesis that remains is that without any of these softer patterns providing support for the more masculine dominant (scale 1A) and ambitious (scale 2) patterns, Ter Horst did not make it to the top of the credibility ranking.

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gemeente. 'Als je als burgemeester vindt dat er iets moet veranderen, haal je een paar mensen aan tafel en dan gebeurt het. Dat is hier wel even anders.'"

**Ministerial Style and Skill Profile—Guusje ter Horst.** The style assessment measures in which style a cabinet minister excels. The term “assessment” refers to the fact that the respondents (inner-circle experts) “assess” the style and skill profile of the cabinet minister for whom they work or used to work.<sup>387</sup> At the time of the interview about Ter Horst (March 2009), the interviewee (FM) who was interviewed in-depth and filled out the style assessment questionnaire for her, had been working for Ter Horst for 3 years. Interviewees BD, SS, and HG also worked with Ter Horst at the highest level of the ministry. At the time of the interviews, BD was a managing policy advisor, SS had been a political and communications advisor for Guusje ter Horst for one year, and HG had been replaced after working with Guusje ter Horst as a top policy advisor.

An additional interviewee goes by the name “SR.” He or she never worked for Ter Horst directly. However, during an interview in March 2009, SR commented on Ter Horst’s work from a more distant perspective, working at the neighboring Ministry of Justice. The Cabinet Ministers of Justice and the Interior (Hirsch Ballin and Ter Horst, respectively) worked on many shared policy goals, and their policy goals overlapped on topics such as national safety, the police, and justice (for example, policy goal 53: fighting severe bad behavior and physical degeneration in municipalities).<sup>388</sup>

After the style assessment with the main interviewee (FM), an in-depth interview (also called inner-circle interview) took place.<sup>389</sup> The interview took approximately 1.5 hours.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> See Part IV for methodological discussions of the operational style assessment.

<sup>388</sup> Source: the Balkenende IV cabinet; document: *Big Board*, Verantwoordingsdag, May 1009.

<sup>389</sup> With FM, at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations; time of the interview: March 2009

<sup>390</sup> Since the in-depth interview comments concerned mostly Guusje ter Horst’s style and complement the style test results, they will be discussed throughout this paragraph, not in a separate paragraph called “inner-circle opinions.” As a result, this chapter has a different structure than the chapters in which the performance of other cabinet

Table 37 below shows a summary of Ter Horst's style and skill profile and the number of points the main interviewee (FM) has given her on each style. The data are displayed in a spider diagram in Figure 31, which shows Ter Horst's style and skill profile at a glance.

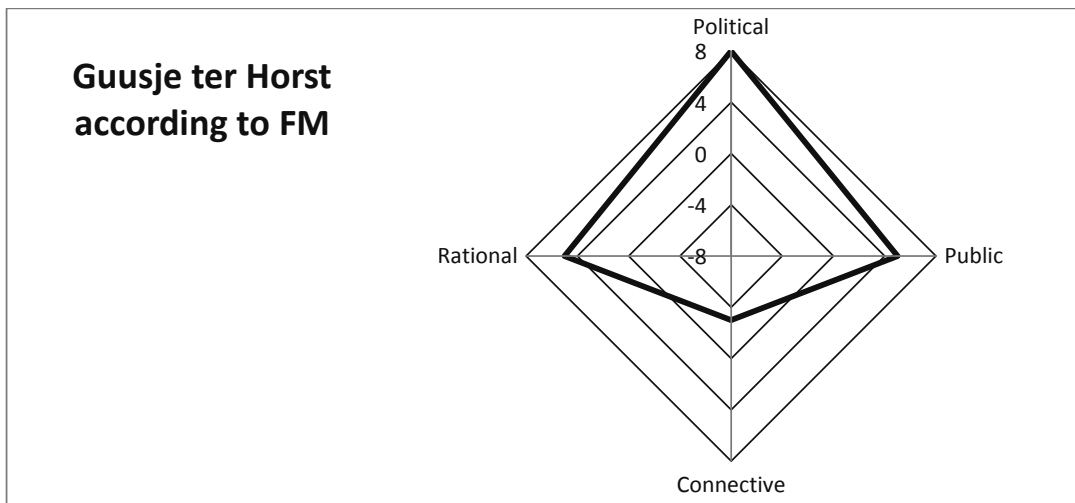
Table 37

*Style and Skill Profile of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010.* Interview Date: March 2009. Interviewee: FM.

Guusje ter Horst's styles and skills according to FM				
Style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+8	+2	0	+2
Yes	0	+3	+1	+3
No	0	0	-2	0
Certainly no	0	0	-2	0
Sum	8	5	-3	5

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ministers was discussed.



*Figure 31.* Style and skill profile of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 37 (interviewee: FM).

The spider diagram in Figure 31 shows that Ter Horst’s style profile is not balanced. Her connective style was underdeveloped, according to the interviewee. The political, public, and rational style, on the other hand, were present within her style and skill profile, to a large extent. Each style and the extent to which it fits the way Guusje ter Horst operated during her term will be discussed below.

The strongest asset of Ter Horst’s style and skill profile, according to interviewee FM, was the political style. Guusje ter Horst was considered “strongly convinced to be in the right,”<sup>391</sup> “highly competitive,”<sup>392</sup> “her power stretched far beyond her own portfolio,”<sup>393</sup> and “best in conflict situations.”<sup>394</sup> The first two statements were confirmed by both other

<sup>391</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

<sup>392</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

<sup>393</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

<sup>394</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

interviewees who filled out the style test assessment. They all agreed that Ter Horst's political style was well developed.

Interviewee SR, who observed Ter Horst's political style while working at the Ministry of Justice across the street from the Ministry of the Interior, made the following comment during one of the inner-circle interviews:

Before this cabinet started, the Ministry of Justice had more power than the Ministry of the Interior. Thanks to Guusje ter Horst's skilled way of operating, that has changed.

So she's good at playing that outward representational role (to the public, to Parliament), I have to admit.<sup>395</sup>

Ter Horst was portrayed as a smart politician who knew how to get what she wanted. What she considered right was considered wrong by others, which is a typical feature of the political style as it was defined by focus groups during the making of the style test. This is why a cabinet minister with a political style was referred to as a Machiavellist by one of the members of one of the style test focus groups. Based on interview comments from her political advisor FM and other inner circle interviewees (FF, SR, and JWH), this characterization seemed to fit Ter Horst as a member of the cabinet well.

Interviewee FM, who worked closely with the cabinet minister as a political and communications advisor during her term between 2007 and 2010, believed that Ter Horst was a typical example of the ambassador type (the public style). He believed that the cabinet minister

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<sup>395</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert SR, March 2009: "In de machtsverhoudingen zoals ze departementaal waren voordat dit kabinet begon, was het Justitie 1 en BzK 2 en het is dankzij haar kundige ingreep echt wel veranderd. Dus op die eerste vertegenwoordigende rol op het departement (naar buiten toe, naar de TK) scoort ze hoog, ik kan niet anders zeggen."

“gave excellent TV performances,”<sup>396</sup> “built her public image carefully,”<sup>397</sup> “was often in the public eye because she knew how to get there,”<sup>398</sup> and “was good at giving media performances.”<sup>399</sup>

According to interviewee FM, Ter Horst supported the “evidence-based approach” (an approach that was adopted by several Dutch cabinets around and after the start of the millennium in order to make better decisions that are based on facts rather than myths and beliefs). Her rational style was well developed according to this interviewee. Cabinet ministers with a rational style have lots of detailed policy portfolio knowledge<sup>400</sup> and prefer scientific evidence over other types of information in a decision-making process.<sup>401</sup> In the case of Guusje ter Horst, the interviews show that all of these statements applied to her style profile. Furthermore, she was believed to be an expert on her policy portfolios.<sup>402</sup> Her experience as a mayor and leader of the police force in Nijmegen likely helped her to feel comfortable with the most important topics that came with her portfolio as Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

The last statement of the rational style applied to her as well, as she was reportedly very rational (in decision-making processes, as opposed to emotional).<sup>403</sup> This may be linked to her political skills and style, as well as her rational skills and style, in which rationality as opposed to emotions rule. SR continued to compare the cabinet minister he worked for (Hirsch Ballin), to

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<sup>396</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

<sup>397</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

<sup>398</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

<sup>399</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

<sup>400</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

<sup>401</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

<sup>402</sup> Answer #1 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, certainly”).

<sup>403</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet (“yes, somewhat”).

Ter Horst. He commented on the rational versus the political style: “Guusje ter Horst is a typical political animal, which has both advantages and disadvantages. [Hirsch Ballin] is exactly the opposite. He is being perceived by the citizens as a scientist, knowledgeable without a doubt.”<sup>404</sup>

Interviewee FM explained how Ter Horst operated around the office at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations: “She is exacting, sharp and pragmatic. Sometimes she has very little patience.”<sup>405</sup> Was it impatience that caused Ter Horst to have an underdeveloped connective style? Cabinet ministers with a strong connective style are often willing to reach for a compromise,<sup>406</sup> which did not typify Guusje ter Horst at all, according to interviewee FM. She was not known as a cabinet minister who greatly valued meetings with stakeholders either.<sup>407</sup> His answers to these statements were some of the few less favorable things FM said about his cabinet minister.

As several inner circle interviewees have said, being a good cabinet minister requires maintaining stakeholder relationships and creating support among those who execute the cabinet minister’s policies. In the case of Guusje ter Horst, important stakeholders were the VNG (the association of Dutch municipalities, *Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten*), and the police. The next paragraph on Ter Horst’s policy goal realization will show that many of her goals required the collaboration of these stakeholders in order to reach policy goals.

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<sup>404</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle interviewee SR, March 2009: Interviewer: “U zegt dat Bzk tegenwoordig op 1 staat? Is dat in termen van invloed op de politieke beslissingen?” Interviewee SR: “Ja, in het kabinet en ook maatschappelijk.” Interviewer: “Wat heeft deze minsiter gedaan, of nagelaten, waardoor dat is gekomen?” Interviewee SR: “Nou Guusje ter Horst is een politiek dier van de eerste orden met al z’n posutieve en negatieve kanten. Deze minister is precies het omgekeerde. Hij wordt door de bevolking gepercipiëerd als een wetenschapper, kundig zonder twijfel, te waardenen.”

<sup>405</sup> Original text in Dutch by inner-circle expert FM in March 2009: “Ze is veeleisend, scherp en pragmatisch. Soms heeft ze – dat geldt voor haar optreden binnen alle arena’s – erg weinig geduld.”

<sup>406</sup> Answer #4 on the style assessment sheet (“no, not at all”).

<sup>407</sup> Answer #3 on the style assessment sheet (“no, not really”).



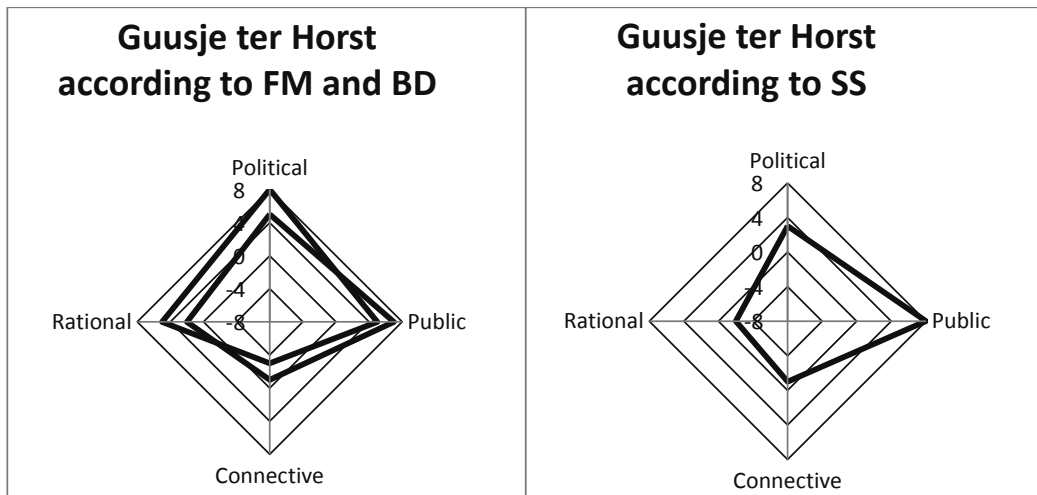
On the connective style, Ter Horst collected a negative number of points. She managed to build some consensus,<sup>408</sup> but she did not necessarily consider a lack of support among stakeholders a deal-breaker.<sup>409</sup> This made the connective style her least developed style, which means she made decisions at the national political level that disregarded what stakeholders wanted, based on her own judgment as a cabinet minister.

**Operational Style - Additional Observations.** Was Guusje ter Horst indeed first and foremost a cabinet minister with a political style? The dominance of her political style was backed by the observations of various other inner circle interviewees, but according to interviewees BD and SS, her public style was developed more than her political style. In Figure 32, Ter Horst's style and skill profile according to the main interviewee FM is compared to the views of BD (a managing policy advisor at the Ministry of the Interior) and SS (a political and communications advisor). Both BD and SS agreed with FM that Ter Horst's political style was well developed and her connective style was not. But they disagreed with FM's opinion that her political style was the most developed one. Both interviewees BD and SS thought that her public style was the strongest asset in her style & skill profile.

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<sup>408</sup> Answer #2 on the style assessment sheet ("yes, somewhat").

<sup>409</sup> Answer #3 on the style assessment sheet ("no, not really").



*Figure 32.* Style and skill profile of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010, according to several different interviewees (FM, BD, and SS).

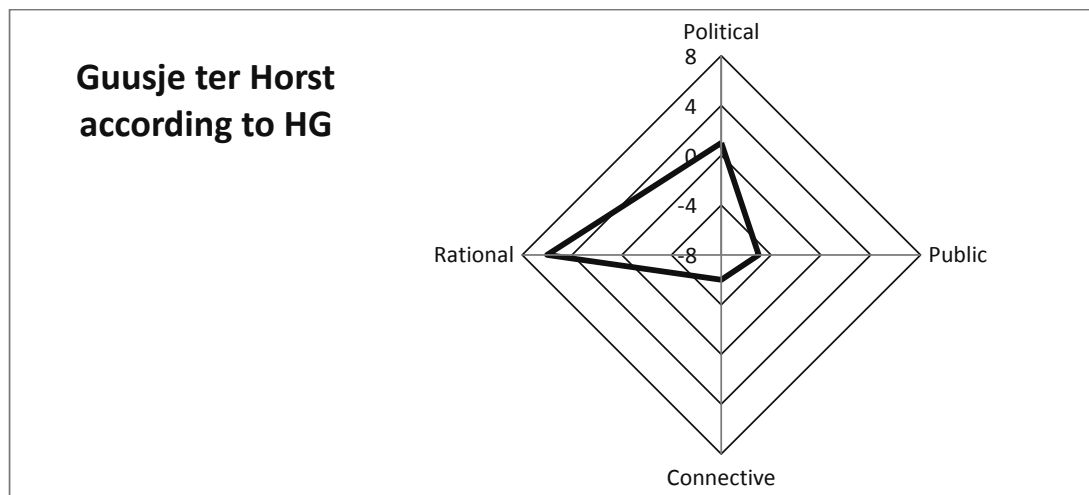
One top policy advisor (HG), who, at the time of the interview, no longer worked for Ter Horst, disagreed with most of the observations of other inner-circle experts. In the years he worked with Guusje ter Horst at the Ministry of the Interior, he had clearly developed a certain antipathy for the cabinet minister, as he listed mainly what he did not like about her performance. Since he was a very experienced advisor in The Hague (at the secretary general level), his opinions should be taken seriously, even though they differ from any other opinion about Ter Horst's style and skill profile so far.

Table 38

*Style and Skill Profile of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010.*

Interview Date: October 2008. Interviewee: HG.

Guusje ter Horst's styles and skills according to HG				
style	Political	Public	Connective	Rational
Certainly yes	+4	0	0	+4
Yes	0	0	0	+2
No	-1	-3	-2	0
Certainly no	-2	-2	-4	0
Sum	1	-5	-6	6



*Figure 33. Style and skill profile of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010, based on data from Table 38.*

Figure 33 shows that interviewee HG did not believe that Ter Horst was good at television and other media performances. He thought that Ter Horst did not manage to draw the attention of the public toward her ministry and that she did not build her public image carefully. When it comes to Ter Horst's connective abilities, HG believed that she was not willing to reach for compromises, that she did not pay attention to stakeholders, that she had very little ability to move various stakeholders in the same direction, and that she made many decisions oblivious of stakeholder wishes. The only style Ter Horst mastered, according to HG, was the rational style. He believed that, at the time of her second year in the cabinet, Ter Horst was an expert within her own portfolio and she "knew what she was talking about." Also, HG believed that she preferred scientific proof over types of information in a decision-making process.

The second style HG used to typify Ter Horst was the political style. According to HG, Ter Horst was strongly convinced she was in the right, and she was very sharp in conflict situations. However, HG believed that she did not have much power beyond her own portfolio and she was not competitive as a cabinet minister (which has been counter-indicated by several other interviewees).

Since two in-depth interviewees (FM and SR) and three style test interviewees who were all working with Guusje ter Horst on a daily basis (FM, BD, and SS) have agreed that she was a savvy politician and knew how to interact with the media, the conclusion of this paragraph should be in line with their ideas. During the in-depth interview with HG, it became clear that HG is either personally or professionally (or both) appalled by the style of Minister Guusje ter Horst. Now, FM's observation seems to fall into place. He said, "You hate her or you love her." Ter Horst clearly made both friends and enemies within the inner-circle at the Ministry. The only

two statements of the style assessment every interviewee (including defiant HG) agreed on, were the following two:

- Guusje ter Horst was highly convinced she was in the right (political style & skill set).
- Guusje ter Horst made decisions oblivious of stakeholder's wishes (countering the presence of a connective style & skill set).

The members of the focus groups who helped setting up the conceptual framework and questionnaire of the style & skill assessment, have agreed that stakeholder support and collaboration are key for a good performance as a cabinet minister. This is why the connective style is one of the four main styles and skills that define operational performance by cabinet ministers in this dissertation. But the connective style & skill set has not proven to be very important when it comes to attaining public credibility. When it comes to ministerial style and skills, the two HPC cabinet ministers had one feature in common that the two LPC cabinet ministers were lacking: a well-developed public style & skill set. Ter Horst's case does not provide counter-indications for this conclusion, as her public style and skill set was well-developed according to several inner-circle interviewees. This may explain why she reached medium, not lower levels of perceived reliability, honesty and competence.

The next chapter discusses Ter Horst's policy goal realization and the extent to which Parliament and the Court of Audit were content with her performance as Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations between 2007 and 2010.

**Policy Goal Realization—Guusje ter Horst.** Guusje ter Horst dedicated her term to 12 policy goals. She was on track with 10 out of 12 goals in 2008, according to the Accountability

Report of May 2009.<sup>410</sup> Goal 52 (a key goal: in Dutch, *sleuteldoel*), 65 and 67 were not sufficiently realized in 2008. Also, there was not enough information to determine whether goal 64 was on track. In other words, Ter Horst's policy goal realization was not flawless. A description of each of the 12 goals will follow below.

Guusje ter Horst carried primary responsibility for the following goals:

- 51 – 100,000 fewer stolen bicycles in 2010 compared to 2006;
- 52 – 25% less physical degeneration and severe social bad behavior in 2010 compared to 2002 (a key goal not on track);
- 53 – 500 extra neighborhood agents (a key goal);
- 55 – decrease alcohol abuse among youngsters (a key goal);

<sup>410</sup> Realisation 2008, Attachment Accountability Report (In Dutch: "bijlage verantwoordingsbrief").

2008 Beleidsdoelen									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74						
Projecten↓					Sleuteldoelen				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- 59 – fighting radicalization;
- 63 – safety regions (in Dutch: *veiligheidsregio's*) will be established and crisis avoidance will meet basic demands in 2009;
- 64 – realizing a government that works better, with fewer employees (lack of accountability information);
- 65 – the national government will have a diverse group of employees in 2011, with at least 25% females in the general government service (in Dutch: *Algemene Bestuursdienst: ABD*) (not on track);
- 67 – strengthening citizenship and the Constitution (not on track);
- 68 – realizing more discretionary policy space for decentralized government bodies; and
- 69 – solving the 10 most annoying administrative burdens felt by citizens.

Furthermore, Ter Horst shared responsibility for goal number 50 with the Ministry of Justice, which was a key goal. Guusje ter Horst and Ernst Hirsch Ballin promised to “reduce crime by 25% in 2010 compared to 2002.”<sup>411</sup>

An overview of Guusje ter Horst’s goals and the extent to which she was on track according to the Accountability Report (written by the cabinet and discussed with the Parliament on Accountability Day in May 2009), is presented in Table 39 below.

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<sup>411</sup> Original text in Dutch: “Een reductie van de criminaliteit met 25% in 2010 ten opzichte van 2002 door: VbbV = co-productie van Justitie en BZK Metingen m.b.v. Veiligheidsmonitor Rijk en Monitor Criminaliteit Bedrijfsleven

Table 39

*Policy Goals of Guusje ter Horst, Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2007–2010.*

Based on the Accountability Report of April/May 2009.

First responsibility	Second responsibility	Realization
	50	Realized – Key goal
51		Realized
52		Not realized – Key goal
53		Realized – Key goal
55		Realized – Key goal
59		Realized
63		Realized
64		Missing information
65		Not realized
67		Not realized
68		Realized
69		Realized



**Discussion of Policy Goals—Guusje ter Horst.** Goal 52, the key goal for which Ter Horst carried first responsibility that was not realized in 2008, was one of the more important goals of the cabinet term: 25% less physical degeneration and severe social bad behavior in 2010 compared to 2002.<sup>412</sup> In 2007 and 2008, the sub-goal was to reduce severe social bad behavior by 17.5%. Degeneration was meant to be reduced by a percentage between 1 and 18.5. In 2007, there was not enough information to determine whether Ter Horst was on track. In 2008, there was sufficient information, and Ter Horst appeared not on track: degeneration was reduced by only 3%.

Cabinet Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Ter Horst explained to the Parliament and the public on Accountability Day in May 2009:

The realization of this goal is linked to the project “safety starts with prevention” [in Dutch: *veiligheid begint bij voorkomen*]. The goal is not on track. This is because the realization in 2008 is behind. New efforts with regards to the “Action plan Bad behavior and Degeneration” should lead to the desired outcome in 2010. The efforts are maximized and new sub goals were formulated for the rest of the cabinet term. At this point, however, it remains unclear whether the goal will be realized in 2010. It takes a while for the results to show. By means of the Safety Monitor [in Dutch:

*Veiligheidsmonitor*] we are keeping track of the changes and if necessary, we can take new measures.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Source: *Big board*, May 2009. PowerPoint presentation of Accountability Report 2008. Original text in Dutch: “Een kwart minder fysieke degeneratie en ernstige sociale bad behavior in 2010 ten opzichte van 2002.”

<sup>413</sup> Source: *Big board*, May 2009. PowerPoint presentation of Accountability Report 2008. Original text in Dutch: “De voortgang van de uitvoering van deze doelstelling, die is gekoppeld aan het project ‘veiligheid begint bij voorkomen’ ligt niet op koers. Dit wordt veroorzaakt door de realisatie over 2008 die achterblijft bij de beoogde reductie voor dat jaar. Met nieuwe maatregelen ten behoeve van de uitvoering van het Actieplan Bad behavior en Degeneration wordt ingezet op het bereiken van de outcomedoelstelling eind 2010. De inspanningen zijn maximaal

As the quote shows, the Cabinet did not explain why the goal was not on track. A few additional sources will help to create a better overview of Ter Horst's policy performance:

- First additional source: Parliament's comments and concerns in May 2009 on the Accountability Report of 2008;
- Second additional source: Parliament's comments and concerns in May 2010 on the Accountability Report of 2009;
- Third additional source: the Court of Audit 2009; and
- Fourth additional source: inner-circle comments on Cabinet Minister Guusje ter Horst's policy goal realization.

#### **First Additional Source: Parliament's Comments and Concerns in May 2009**

**(Accountability Report 2008).** With regards to goal number 52 (25% less severe social bad behavior and physical degeneration), a Parliament member noticed that the number of registered robberies had increased 26% since the Balkenende IV cabinet started its term.<sup>414</sup> Another member explained that, even though the ministries have done good work when it comes to safety, he was highly concerned about goal 52. According to the spokesman, the people felt that public spaces were becoming more and more unsafe.<sup>415</sup> A third Parliament member urged the CU to take this problem much more seriously:

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en er zijn nieuwe tussenstappen geformuleerd voor de resterende duur van de kabinetsperiode, maar het blijft onzeker of dit leidt tot de gewenste afname in % eind 2010. Het duurt enige tijd voordat de maatregelen effect hebben. Aan de hand van de uitkomsten van de Veiligheidsmonitor wordt vinger aan de pols gehouden en worden zonodig nieuwe (beleids) initiatieven ontplooid.”

<sup>414</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: “Het aantal taakstraffen neemt toe en het aantal onvoorwaardelijke gevangenisstraffen neemt af. Dit terwijl het aantal geregistreerde overvallen is toegenomen met bijna 26% sinds het aantreden van dit kabinet. Ook worden mensen die nog gewoon een jaar in de cel thuishoren naar huis gestuurd met een enkelbandje. Ik zou zeggen: Nederland heeft helaas genoeg criminelen om die cellen te vullen zonder ze eerst te sluiten.”

<sup>415</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: Van Geel: “Ik heb net gezegd dat er op het gebied van de veiligheid veel gebeurd is, maar dat

A feeling? These are hard numbers that indicate that the Netherlands have become unsafe. ... And what is the reaction of the cabinet? The efforts are maximized and new sub-goals were formulated, but it remains unclear whether the desired outcome will be realized. You can't let this happen!<sup>416</sup>

A spokesman for the VVD stated that goal 52 was too important to be a failure and that this was a bad moment to cut the budget for capacity in jails and prisons.<sup>417</sup> A PvdA member thought that the cabinet did not show enough remorse about failing to bring goal number 52 on track: "This is one of the goals that the cabinet can't afford to leave unrealized."<sup>418</sup>

The Parliament agreed that the cabinet needed to come with a new policy plan to reduce physical degeneration and social bad behavior. The Parliament asked the cabinet to meet with

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er nog wel zorgen zijn, zoals de wijkagenten. Het kabinet geeft zelf aan dat de doelstelling om een kwart minder fysieke degeneration en ernstige sociale bad behavior te bereiken niet op koers ligt. Dat baart ons grote zorgen. Het gevoel van onveiligheid wordt blijkbaar meer bepaald door deze zaken in de publieke sector dan door wat ik maar noem de traditionele hardcore criminaliteit, maar daar zit hem nu juist de kneep; het gevoel dat de openbare ruimte verloedert en, dat is ook zo, niet alleen de fysieke openbare ruimte, de straat, het plein, maar ook de virtuele openbare ruimte, de websites, internet, de brievenrubrieken. Kortom, wat wij zien is kroegtaal, intimidatie, korte lontjes en dat zien en voelen mensen in dit land."

<sup>416</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: Mevrouw Verdonk (Verdonk): "Ik schrik toch wel van de woorden van de heer Van Geel. Het gevoel van mensen is dat het onveilig is. Het gevoel? Het zijn gewoon keiharde cijfers dat het onveiliger is geworden in Nederland. Denk even aan de wijken in Gouda, aan de wijken in Amsterdam, aan Marokkaanse bad behaviorplegers! Debat na debat zit ik met fractiegenoten van de heer Van Geel die iedere keer een heel grote broek aantrekken als het erom gaat wat er moet gaan gebeuren. En wat zegt dit kabinet? De inspanningen zijn maximaal en er zijn nieuwe tussenstappen geformuleerd voor de resterende duur van de kabinetsperiode, maar het blijft onzeker of dit leidt tot de gewenste afname in procenten eind 2010! Dat kunt u toch niet laten gebeuren!"

<sup>417</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: De heer Rutte "Ik heb de cijfers geschetst. Het aantal taakstraffen is verdubbeld, het aantal voorwaardelijk opgelegde straffen is flink afgenomen, het aantal ernstige overvallen is met meer dan 25% toegenomen. Het gaat fout met de straffen en met de degeneration in Nederland. Dit is het verkeerde moment om op het aantal cellen te bezuinigen. Die cellen zullen wij keihard nodig hebben als wij wel normale straffen opleggen. Eergisteren of gisteren zei u nog dat er moet worden opgetreden tegen mensen die zich misdragen tegen gezagsdragers."

<sup>418</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: Mevrouw Hamer "Ik ben bang dat het weinig mensen iets zegt dat beleidsdoel 52 op rood staat. Eerlijk gezegd vind ik dat het kabinet nog te weinig uitstraalt dat het daar echt mee zit. Beleidsdoel 52 is wel het doel dat gaat over fysieke degeneration en ernstige sociale bad behavior. Dat is dus een van de doelen die echt niet op achterstand kan blijven staan."

mayors to make sure that they were using their tools and instruments to reduce physical degeneration and social bad behavior effectively and efficiently.<sup>419</sup> Furthermore, the Parliament agreed that, contrary to current cabinet plans, the cabinet should invest in the police force instead of cutting the police budget. The Parliament believed that goal number 52 could not be realized unless the cabinet invested properly.<sup>420</sup> The debate revealed a lot of criticism in the parliamentary debate about the portfolio of Cabinet Minister Guusje ter Horst in 2009. She faced more criticism from the Parliament during the debate than any of the other selected cabinet ministers on this Accountability Day.

On September 7, 2009, Guusje ter Horst and her colleague, Cabinet Minister Eberhard van der Laan, stated that the cabinet had reserved 150 million Euro extra to fight bad behavior and degeneration in 2010 and 2011.<sup>421</sup> The two cabinet ministers and 40 municipalities signed a

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<sup>419</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: “Motie. De Kamer, gehoord de beraadslaging, constaterende dat het terugdringen van fysieke degeneration en ernstige sociale bad behavior achterblijft bij de doelen; overwegende dat dit om een extra inspanning in deze kabinetsperiode vraagt; verzoekt de regering, de toegezegde beleidsmaatregelen aan de Kamer voor te leggen om de fysieke degeneration en ernstige sociale bad behavior versneld verder terug te dringen; verzoekt de regering voorts, apart in overleg te treden met burgemeesters om het hun ter beschikking staande instrumentarium om fysieke degeneration en ernstige bad behavior te voorkomen, adequaat en doeltreffend te gebruiken, en gaat over tot de orde van de dag. De voorzitter: Deze motie is voorgesteld door de leden Van Geel, Hamer en Slob. Naar mij blijkt, wordt de indiening ervan voldoende ondersteund. Zij krijgt nr. 3 (31951).”

<sup>420</sup> Source: Accountability debate, May 28, 2009. In Dutch: verantwoordingsdebat 28 mei 2009, TK 89 89-6918. Original text in Dutch: “Motie De Kamer, gehoord de beraadslaging, constaterende dat het kabinetsdoel 5 “een kwart minder degeneration en ernstige bad behavior in 2010 ten opzichte van 2002” niet op koers ligt; constaterende dat de regering voornemens is, nog meer te bezuinigen op de politie met als gevolg dat sprake zal zijn van capaciteitstekort, minder blauw op straat en minder dienders om aangiften op te nemen en strafzaken op te helderen; van mening dat juist meer politiecapaciteit nodig is om tot een reductie van ernstige vormen van bad behavior en criminaliteit te komen; verzoekt de regering, geen bezuinigingsmaatregelen te nemen die ten koste gaan van het totale aantal agenten, blauw op straat en de instroom van aspirantpolitieagenten, en gaat over tot de orde van de dag. De voorzitter: Deze motie is voorgesteld door het lid Rutte. Naar mij blijkt, wordt de indiening ervan voldoende ondersteund. Zij krijgt nr. 4 (31951).”

<sup>421</sup> <http://www.inoverheid.nl/artikel/nieuws/1898960/150-miljoen-extra-tegen-bad-behavior-en-degeneration.html>

manifest<sup>422</sup> to fight bad behavior and social degeneration: “Although objectively many neighborhoods have become safer, citizens do not feel safe. And we will not accept that.”<sup>423</sup> Municipalities agreed to make the problems of bad behavior and degeneration a priority.

**Second Additional Source: Parliament’s Comments and Concerns in May 2010 on the Accountability Report of 2009.** When the cabinet resigned in February 2010, the cabinet ministers still needed to account for the work they accomplished, or did not accomplish, in 2009 on Accountability Day in May 2010. Ter Horst’s policy goal number 52 (a 25% reduction of bad behavior and degeneration in 2010 compared to 2002) had not been sufficiently realized. Some Parliament members even thought that the situation had worsened. New elections were coming up in the summer of 2010, which likely caused Parliament members to have a more complicated political agenda at this point. A few quotes are listed below to illustrate the debate:

- Rutte: “Citizens are much more interested in the reduction of degeneration, which has not taken place. More likely, it has increased.”<sup>424</sup>
- Rutte: “Has the cabinet been able to [realize goal 52]? No, the cabinet admits that, instead of a reduction of 25%, there is an increase of severe bad behavior. ... The

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<sup>422</sup> <http://www.kei-centrum.nl/pages/8788/Nieuws/Eindhoven-krijgt--43-miljoen-om-bad-behavior-en-degeneration-aan-te-pakken.html>

<sup>423</sup> Manifest to fight bad behavior and degeneration ([www.kei-centrum.nl](http://www.kei-centrum.nl)). Original text in Dutch: “De doelstelling van 25% reductie van bad behavior en degeneration is nog niet in zicht. De problematiek is hardnekkig. Veel wijken zijn objectief gezien weliswaar veiliger geworden, maar burgers ervaren dat blijkbaar niet zo. Daar leggen we ons niet bij neer. De ministers van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties en voor Wonen, Wijken en Integratie en 40 gemeenten geven in het kader van het nieuwe stedenbeleid gezamenlijk een extra impuls aan het terugdringen van de door burgers ervaren bad behavior en degeneration.”

<sup>424</sup> Tweede Kamer Verantwoordingsdebat 20 mei 2010 TK 86 86-7205. Original text in Dutch: Rutte: “Dit kabinet spreekt ondertussen voortdurend over de stand van zaken van de eigen 74 doelstellingen en de 10 projecten, maar het maakt op geen enkele manier onderscheid naar de kwaliteit. De burger hecht veel meer belang aan de aanpak van de degeneration, die niet is opgelost en eerder toeneemt.”

cabinet refuses to cut budgets, but cuts into the safety budget. After all, there is 190 million euro less for police officers.”<sup>425</sup>

- Wilders: “2009 was a disaster. A crashing economy, unemployment (...), low safety, bad behavior.”<sup>426</sup>
- Cramer: “A lot has been accomplished, but we’re not done by far. A good number of flags signals red. An important point is the shredded character of policies. Municipalities, police, justice and Ministries need to cooperate a lot better.”<sup>427</sup>

In April 2010, the collaborating cabinet ministers on safety in the Netherlands published a separate Accountability Report on the project “safety starts with prevention” (in Dutch: *Veiligheid begint bij Voorkomen*). They listed all “measurable results” of the project of which policy goal 52 (25% reduction of bad behavior and degeneration) is part. Some of the results were:

- the manifest fighting bad behavior and degeneration,<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Tweede Kamer Verantwoordingsdebat 20 mei 2010 TK 86 86-7205. Original text in Dutch: Rutte: “Voortdurend claimt het kabinet dat Nederland steeds veiliger wordt. Ik geloof best dat er minder fietsendiefstallen zijn. Dat is goed nieuws. Hoe zit het echter met de overvallen bij mensen thuis of in de winkel? Hoe zit het met vandalisme, zoals het beschadigen van auto’s of de vernielingen aan de buitenkant van woningen of aan tuinen? Hierover hoor ik het kabinet helemaal niet. Is het kabinet er eigenlijk in geslaagd om bad behavior en degeneration terug te dringen? Nee, ook hier moet het kabinet toegeven dat er in plaats van een vermindering van 25% sprake is van een stijging van de ernstige bad behavior. Wat doet het kabinet daaraan? Het kabinet wil niet bezuinigen, maar bezuinigt nu juist wel op de veiligheid. Er is namelijk 190 mln. minder voor agenten. Dat is de keuze van het kabinet-Balkenende IV.”

<sup>426</sup> Kamer Verantwoordingsdebat 20 mei 2010 TK 86 86-7205. Original text in Dutch: “De heer Wilders (PVV): Mevrouw de voorzitter. 2009 was een rampjaar: een instortende economie, werkloosheid, massa-immigratie, islamisering, onveiligheid, bad behavior, slechte zorg, lange files en hoge belastingen.”

<sup>427</sup> Tweede Kamer Verantwoordingsdebat 20 mei 2010 TK 86 86-7205. Original text in Dutch: Cramer: “Er is veel bereikt, maar we zijn nog lang niet klaar. Er staan flink wat seinen in het rood. Een belangrijk knelpunt is de versnippering van beleid. Gemeenten, politie, justitie en ministeries moeten veel beter samenwerken.”

<sup>428</sup> April 2010. Accountability report on “Safety Starts with Prevention” by the Balkenende IV cabinet. Title in Dutch: “Veiligheid Begint Bij Voorkomen.” Tastbare resultaten en een vooruitblik. Result number 2. In Dutch: “Manifest bestrijding overlast en verloedering.”

- a first national scan of youngster groups in the Netherlands,<sup>429</sup>
- a toolkit for municipalities to reduce physical degeneration,<sup>430</sup> and
- a new regulation that should enable municipalities to overview and manage the process with other public organizations.<sup>431</sup>

In sum, throughout the cabinet term, Ter Horst failed to convince the Parliament that the streets in the Netherlands were safer in 2008 and 2009 than they were before. One of the major points of criticism was that the cabinet was cutting the police budget. Guusje ter Horst was unable to perform better in 2009 than she did in 2008, according to Parliament.

**Policy Performance: Final Remarks.** After discussing an HPC cabinet minister with a flawless policy performance (Hirsch Ballin), an HPC cabinet minister with a slightly problematic policy performance (Plasterk), and two LPC cabinet ministers with equally divided operational performance results, a conclusion can be drawn on the links between policy performance and public credibility. Cramer and Ter Horst had the most problematic policy performance, followed by Ronald Plasterk, so cabinet ministers who do not realize policy goals are found in all parts of the public credibility ranking. Also, cabinet ministers with flawless policy goal results are found at either ends of the public credibility ranking as well. In other words: policy performance seems to have little or nothing to do with the ability of cabinet ministers to attain public credibility.

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<sup>429</sup> April 2010. Accountability report on “Safety Starts with Prevention” by the Balkenende IV cabinet. Title in Dutch: “Veiligheid Begint Bij Voorkomen. Tastbare resultaten en een vooruitblik.” Result number 5. In Dutch: “Eerste landelijk beeld van alle jeugdgroepen in Nederland.”

<sup>430</sup> April 2010. Accountability report on “Safety Starts with Prevention” by the Balkenende IV cabinet. Title in Dutch: “Veiligheid Begint Bij Voorkomen. Tastbare resultaten en een vooruitblik.” Result number 10. In Dutch: “Toolkit terugdringen fysieke verloedering.”

<sup>431</sup> April 2010. Accountability report on “Safety Starts with Prevention” by the Balkenende IV cabinet. Title in Dutch: “Veiligheid Begint Bij Voorkomen. Tastbare resultaten en een vooruitblik.” Result number 14. In Dutch: “Wetsvoorstel regierol gemeenten.”

### **Summary of Part VI: The Lower and Medium Public Credibility Cases**

The data discussed in Part VI have suggested that there are at least two ways to become an LPC cabinet minister in the Netherlands. Eimert van Middelkoop attained lower credibility with rather positive inner-circle opinions about his performance at his own ministry, and more negative inner circle opinions at the other ministries (Part III), with a reticent-accommodating communicated personality profile with only a small amount of the conscientious pattern, with no highly developed style and skill sets, and with a flawless policy performance.

Jacqueline Cramer attained lower credibility with missing data on inner-circle opinions at her own ministry and negative inner-circle opinions at the other ministries (Part III), with a conscientious-accommodating communicated personality profile and a small amount of the aggrieved pattern, and with a problematic policy performance.

Guusje ter Horst attained medium credibility with mixed inner circle opinions about her operational performance, almost equal amounts of the ambitious, contentious, and dominant communicated personality patterns, a developed public and political style & skill set, and a problematic policy performance.

Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer both had significant trouble attaining a steady amount of perceived competence throughout their terms. Their perceived reliability, and at times their perceived honesty, were much higher than their perceived competence was. Why was perceived competence so difficult to attain for these cabinet ministers? As suggested in Part IV, this may have something to do with all of the references in the written press about the lack of skills and the reported “stumbling” of these cabinet ministers. Both the quantitative media analysis in Part III, and the qualitative media analysis in Part VI (communicated personality



patterns) have shown that the newspapers often rated the performance of these cabinet ministers low.

In the case of Van Middelkoop, any incompetences other than a lack of media skills have not been reported during the inner circle interviews. The inner-circle experts who did not believe in the quality of his policy goal realization admitted that they did not know the minister well enough and that their opinions most likely had been influenced by the media. The inner-circle expert who knew Van Middelkoop well stated that the Defense Ministry under Van Middelkoop was in good condition. His policy goal realization overview confirmed that according to both the cabinet and the parliament, there were no shortcomings in Van Middelkoop's policy goal realization. So the low perceived competence of Eimert van Middelkoop, Cabinet Minister of Defense, does not seem to be rooted in any real incompetences in his operational performance, other than his inability to create good media appearance (which seems to have robbed him of the ability to attain higher public credibility).

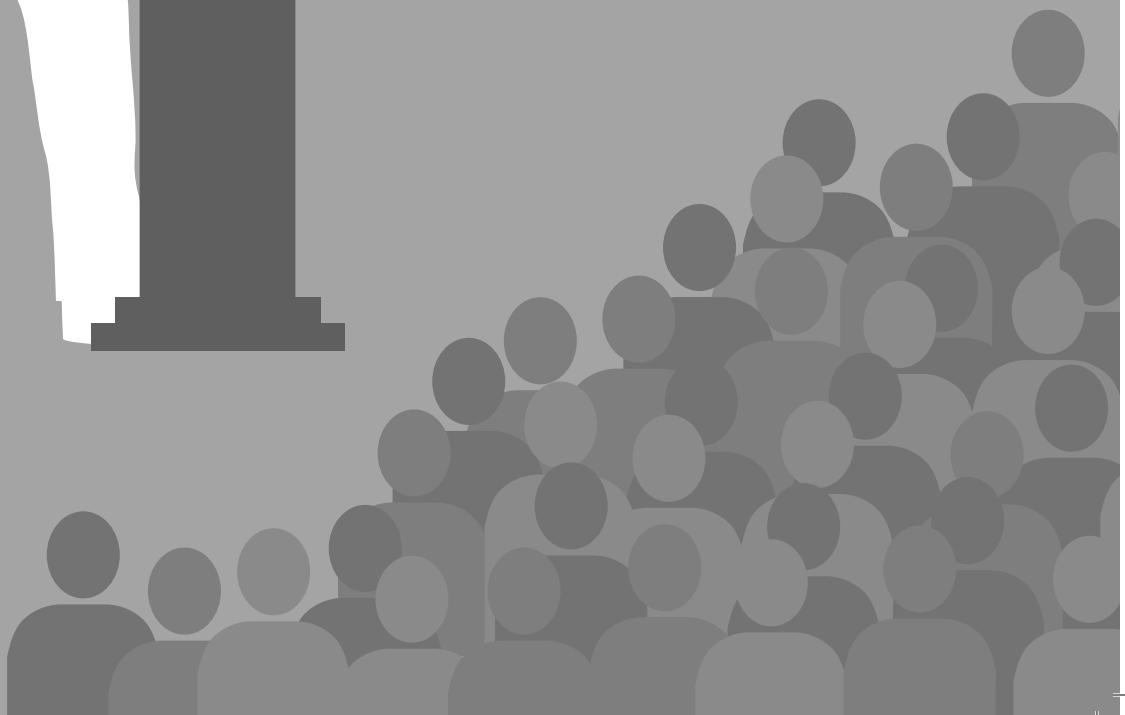
In the case of Cramer, there were a few references in the inner circle interviews to her being "too kind to be a good politician" and her not being a "real politician". Furthermore, the study on her policy goal realization showed that there was a real lack of results. Both the cabinet and the Parliament reported that Cramer was not on track with her policy goal realization during her term.

In other words, the lack of perceived competence in the case of Van Middelkoop seems mainly connected to his negative media appearance (or "scapegoating" as discussed in Part IV), while in the case of Cramer, there was a real problem with her policy goal realization, aside from her also fairly negative media appearance. There are two aspects that Van Middelkoop and Cramer have in common that the HPC cabinet ministers do not have: their undesirable

communicated personality patterns, and their problems with media performance. Since Ter Horst was reportedly much more media savvy than her LPC colleagues, and also a lot more credible according to the public, and since the HPC ministers both had a well-developed public style as well, media skills seem to be the only ministerial skills linked to public credibility. Aside from the presence of media skills, media appearance as a result of those media skills, matters as well. Researching media skills and communicated personality profiles of cabinet ministers can both help to understand their levels of public credibility.



# Conclusions and Reflections



## CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In this dissertation I have discussed what public credibility of cabinet ministers is according to Dutch citizens and how credibility in action can be understood. The journey started with two research questions:

1. Which qualities do Dutch citizens look for in a higher credibility cabinet minister, and which cabinet ministers display these qualities best?
2. What increases a cabinet minister's ability to attain public credibility?

The findings of this dissertation are summarized and discussed below. Separate text boxes contain methodological and interpretational reflection on conclusions and hypotheses that have resulted from the analyses throughout this dissertation.

### **Research Question #1: Which qualities do Dutch citizens look for in a higher credibility cabinet minister, and which cabinet ministers display these qualities best?**

Assuming credibility is an important element in the relationship between citizens and cabinet ministers, I have asked citizens to choose the qualities of a higher credibility cabinet minister. As it turns out, reliability, honesty and competence are the three most important qualities according to Dutch citizens. These three make up the prototype of a higher-credibility cabinet minister. As discussed repeatedly throughout this dissertation, it is important to make a distinction between what citizens want (a reliable, honest and competent cabinet minister) and what they see: the appearance of more or less reliable, honest and competent cabinet ministers. The outcome of the latter is called **perceived** reliability, honesty and competence. This requires a judgment by citizens of a cabinet minister. The prototype, however, does not involve this personal judgment. It reflects the characteristics of the fictional, ideal cabinet ministers citizens have in mind. The prototype of a higher credibility cabinet Minister according to citizens in the Netherlands

remained surprisingly stable over time: reliability, honesty and competence were the three most important qualities Dutch citizens look for in a cabinet Minister in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Respondents were then asked to make a personal judgment. They were asked if and to what extent they felt the ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV possessed the three qualities of the prototype. The cabinet ministers with the highest scores were called higher public credibility (HPC) cabinet ministers. The two HPC cases selected for further research were Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk, because they displayed the credibility qualities best according to Dutch citizens. Those in the middle of the ranking were called medium public credibility (MPC) cabinet ministers. Guusje ter Horst was selected as an MPC cabinet minister, because she attained a medium, fair amount of public credibility. Jacqueline Cramer and Eimert van Middelkoop ended up at the tail of the ranking, and were therefore called lower public credibility (LPC) cabinet ministers. The five central cases were selected in order to answer the second research question (what increases public credibility?).

Three distinct concepts have been discussed in this dissertation, and keeping them separated conceptually is key to understand public credibility. There is a prototype, which requires no personal judgment with regards to a cabinet minister. Secondly, there is perceived reliability, honesty and competence, which together reflect public credibility belief. This requires respondents to personally judge the character of a cabinet minister. The third concept also refers to public credibility, but this time it is viewed from another angle: how does a cabinet minister appear in terms of reliability, honesty and competence? This reflects the actual public credibility of a cabinet minister. While perceived reliability, honesty and competence are indicative of the citizen's thoughts about the cabinet minister, appearing reliable, honest and competent (attaining public credibility) can be done by a cabinet minister him- or herself. Several factors contribute to

this higher credibility appearance. These factors will be discussed in the remainder of this conclusion, after addressing a few methodological choices made with regards to the credibility survey in Box 9 through 11 below.

**Box 9. Methodological Reflection on the Credibility Survey – Part 1.** While working on the first research question, a few potential methodological caveats were overcome. Best practices of prototype research around the world were discussed in Part I in order to learn from other researchers, and design a strong questionnaire for the credibility survey. The lessons learned from other surveys were incorporated into the credibility survey. Secondly, four measurements were carried out over a period of two years. This has considerably strengthened the validity and reliability of the outcome.

**Box 10. Methodological Reflection on the Credibility Survey – Part 2.** The second part of the credibility survey, in which the LISS panel was asked which of the sixteen cabinet Ministers of Balkenende IV were the most reliable, honest and competent, resulted in a public credibility ranking. This ranking is based on a scale in which the three variables are equally important. I have considered weighing the three variables for their importance in the prototype. This would require giving perceived reliability a stronger weight than perceived honesty, and perceived honesty a stronger weight than perceived competence. However, the three variables are considered equally important, because the threesome matches the most common definitions of credibility. Most definitions of credibility include elements of trust *and* competence.<sup>432</sup> Therefore, perceived competence, even though it reflects the third variable of the credibility prototype, and is therefore possibly less important than the first two (reliability

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<sup>432</sup> See Box 3 of the General Introduction.

and honesty), has been given equal weight. Consequently, in this dissertation, a higher credibility cabinet Minister has convinced a majority of the respondents of his or her reliability and honesty, as well as competence.

**Box 11. Reflection on Case Selection.** Two selected cabinet Ministers were the absolute winners, two were at the tail of the credibility ranking, and a medium credibility cabinet minister was selected as well, to avoid any blind spots when studying public credibility in action. Although a few ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV were close to attaining as much public credibility as Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk (for example: Maxim Verhagen), the selected cases offered the best chance of providing conclusive answers to the research questions of this dissertation for reasons discussed in Part II. A medium credibility cabinet minister was added to the selection because researching solely the higher and the lower credibility cabinet ministers at both ends of the credibility ranking would have given an idea of the aspects of a cabinet minister's actions that may be linked to attaining public credibility, but it is the grey in between the black and the white that brings nuance to conclusions. Therefore, medium credibility cabinet ministers, one of which was researched at length in Part VI, have played an important role in my attempts to understand the credibility of cabinet Ministers in the Netherlands.

Another potential shortcoming could have been the variance between cabinet Ministers on the credibility ranking. As it turned out, however, there was quite a difference between HPC and LPC cabinet ministers in terms of their credibility scores. Therefore, differences between cabinet ministers in terms of media appearance and operational performance can be considered meaningful in the process of understanding public credibility.



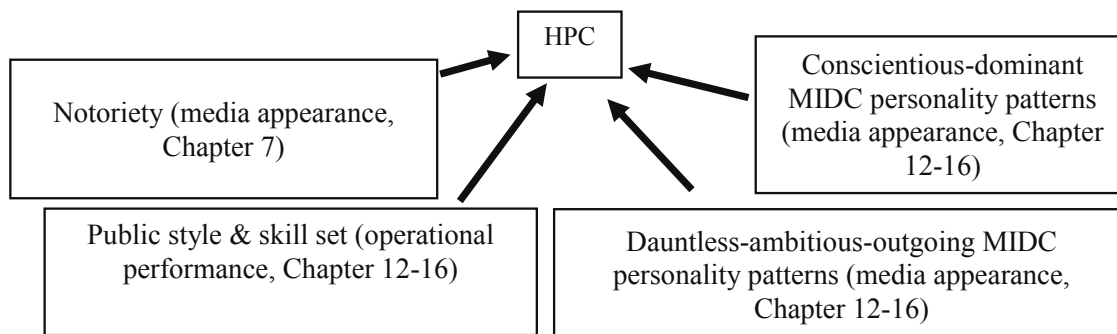
**Research Question #2: What Increases a Cabinet Minister's Ability to Attain Higher Public Credibility?** How do we explain the credibility rankings of ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV? Two main explanatory variables were analyzed in order to better understand this puzzle: media appearance and operational performance of cabinet ministers. They will be summarized and discussed below, along with the most important findings of the research project. Features exclusively seen in HPC cabinet ministers will be discussed first, followed by features exclusively seen in LPC cabinet ministers. Last is a discussion of features that seem unrelated to the ability of cabinet ministers to attain public credibility. The two explanatory variables and their components are displayed in box 12.

<b>Box 12. Explanatory variables and several components.</b>		
<i>Analyzed in</i>	<i>Components of media appearance</i>	<i>Components of operational performance</i>
Part III	Nature of press coverage (positive/negative comments in headlines)	Inner circle expert opinions on operational performance of cabinet ministers
	Volume of press coverage (notoriety)	
Part V/VI	Communicated personality patterns	Style and skill profile
		Policy goal realization (policy performance)

**Box 13. Explanatory Variables.** The work that was methodologically trickier than designing the credibility survey, was answering the second research question: what explains public

credibility in action? What “we know about our society, even about the world we live in, we know it through the mass media” (Luhmann, 2000, introduction). Consequently, media appearance had to be the first central explanatory variable. The second variable also appeared almost automatically from literature on determinants of trust and credibility: scholars in political science and practitioners in government and politics have mentioned whether and how the operational performance of cabinet Ministers and other public institutions may influence their public credibility. The two explanatory variables, media appearance and operational performance, have been analyzed throughout this dissertation as two completely different variables. This was done to single out the two variables as much as possible, in order to obtain a better idea of the way in which each of them may be linked to public credibility. However, in reality there are many cross-links between the two explanatory variables. For example, the research sources for the analysis on the nature of press coverage included media messages about the performance of cabinet ministers. Also, in order to determine the performance levels of cabinet ministers, many of the inner circle interviewees came up with a definition of performance that included the media skills of cabinet ministers. Furthermore, the style and skill assessment included four styles (or skills sets), with one of them being the public style that reflected how talented and skilled a cabinet minister was with regards to addressing the media. It even included the end result of a cabinet minister’s media appearance, since one statement of the style and skill assessment concerned the ability of the cabinet minister to make a good impression on television.

Features exclusively found in **HPC** cabinet ministers are:



In Chapter 7, the analysis of media appearance in terms of negative and positive feedback in newspaper headlines has shown only one remarkable aspect that has set the cabinet ministers on the credibility ranking apart: their exposure, or notoriety (top-left in the picture above).<sup>433</sup> Besides the volume of press articles, the analysis in Chapter 7 contained another element about the cabinet minister's appearance in newspaper headlines: the positive or negative nature of messages about the cabinet minister. The notoriety hypothesis that resulted from Chapter 7 implies that only the volume (frequency), not the extent to which headlines contain criticism or compliments about cabinet ministers and their performance, is related to their public credibility.<sup>434</sup> This implies that mere attention for, and notoriety of cabinet ministers can help them attain higher levels of public credibility.

**Box 14. Implications and Limitations of the Notoriety Hypothesis.** In theory, the notoriety hypothesis implies that Jacqueline Cramer could have raised her public

<sup>433</sup> Ernst Hirsch Ballin's name occurred in 451 headlines or leads of articles, Ronald Plasterk's name occurred the most: 560 times. Eimert van Middelkoop had the lowest number of occurrences: 223, followed by Jacqueline Cramer. She was mentioned in the headline or lead of 300 articles. See Chapter 7.

<sup>434</sup> Although more negatively charged headlines were found on Eimert van Middelkoop than on both HPC cabinet ministers, the data set does not explain why Jacqueline Cramer was ranked lower on public credibility, since the balance between positive and negative media messages about her was similar to that of the HPC cabinet ministers.

credibility by being more present in the news media, regardless of the nature of those articles. However, a causal relationship between notoriety and public credibility cannot be proven based on the analyses discussed in this dissertation. Due to limitations in social science, especially when field research and qualitative methods are required, the claims I am able to make are somewhat limited, and interpretative caution is required. The most important limitation was the scarcity of HPC and LPC cases to use in comparison. With merely sixteen ministers in a cabinet, only four can be consistently found at either ends of the credibility ranking. On the other hand, both the selection of cabinet ministers and the analysis of media articles were carried out according to international standards of both statistic and media content analysis, and with methodological caution. In other words, the notoriety hypothesis that resulted from the analysis in Chapter 7 occurred from reliable and valid research methods and analyses, but requires solidifying by means of further testing with different cases, in different periods of time, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Most of what the LISS panel respondents know about cabinet ministers, they know through news media (Luhmann, 2000). How do we explain, then, that the LISS panel respondents have consistently, in four measurements over a period of two years, claimed that Ronald Plasterk and Ernst Hirsch Ballin were much more reliable, honest, and competent in their perception than most other cabinet ministers? The survey results have shown a great amount of consistency over time, which strengthens the conclusion that higher public credibility can be understood by researching variables that are strongly attached to the person of the cabinet minister.

While Chapter 7 shows that public credibility of cabinet ministers cannot be understood by simply counting negative and positive opinions expressed in newspaper headlines, Chapters 12 through 16 have shown that the content of media messages matters after all. This knowledge surfaced when a different type of media analysis was applied: a media analysis that reveals communicated personality patterns of cabinet ministers (see also box 13).

**Box 15. The Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria by Immelman (2004) and**

**Adaptations.** The traditional MIDC by Immelman, with which personality patterns of target persons can be found through meta-analysis, has been adapted for proper use in this dissertation. The aim of this dissertation was not to ‘diagnose personality patterns’, but to find **communicated** personality patterns of cabinet ministers. The traditional interpretation of Immelman’s MIDC (2004) was adapted here because based on the available source materials it would have been irresponsible to make any claims about the biographic, real personalities of cabinet Ministers in the Netherlands. Secondly, using the traditional MIDC with which those biographic personality patterns can be found, was not necessary in order to answer the research questions of this dissertation. The adapted instrument, and the knowledge that was created as a result, have proven to be useful to the process of understanding the difference between higher and lower public credibility cabinet ministers in the Netherlands. A psycho-diagnostic instrument became a media analysis instrument, and it has proven to be particularly useful in this dissertation.

The first communicated personality profile exclusively found in HPC cabinet ministers contains both the conscientious personality pattern (scale 6) and the dominant pattern (scale 1A). In the case of Ernst Hirsch Ballin, the conscientious communicated personality pattern has

provided the image of a highly reliable cabinet minister, which is no surprise given the characteristics of conscientious individuals. They are usually “dutiful, organized, disciplined, and self-controlled; responsible, conscientious, and prudent; orderly and systematic.”<sup>435</sup> Ernst Hirsch Ballin’s communicated personality profile featured these traits, as well as some dominant communicated personality patterns (scale 1A) that may have added the necessary strength to his image. Dominant individuals can be “commanding: highly assertive, tough, strong-willed, [and] outspoken (...)” (Immelman, 2004, p. 18). **Ernst Hirsch Ballin’s combined conscientious-dominant communicated personality profile is most likely one of the reasons he attained a higher amount of public credibility than most other cabinet ministers.** See also Box 16 for examples of other successful Dutch politicians in the last two decades, with similar communicated personality patterns.

**Box 16. The Conscientious Personality Pattern (Scale 6): an Old Dutch Favorite?** The classic conscientious personality pattern seen in Ernst Hirsch Ballin has been seen in many successful Dutch politicians, including the two Prime Ministers in the past two decades: Wim Kok and Jan Peter Balkenende.<sup>436</sup> De Landtsheer (2004, 2009) used the traditional MIDC by Immelman (2004) to study the personalities of a few members of the so-called “Purple Cabinet,” which was the cabinet prior to Balkenende I, II, III and IV. Wim Kok was the Prime Minister of several purple cabinets. He was reportedly trusted by an exceptionally large percentage of the people.<sup>437</sup> He was rarely criticized and was reportedly more popular than

<sup>435</sup> See second edition revised (MIDC–II–R) by Aubrey Immelman (2004) from the published work of Theodore Millon (1969, 1986; 1990; 1994; 1996; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985).

<sup>436</sup> My analyses of Jan Peter Balkenende’s and Wouter Bos’ communicated MIDC personality patterns are too lengthy to include in this dissertation or the appendices, but are available upon request via [evawisse@yahoo.com](mailto:evawisse@yahoo.com).

<sup>437</sup> Volkskrant 27-02-2010, katern 4 pag. 29, Dutch title: “Stuurloos dobberen.” English title translation by EW: “Rudderless Drift.” Authors: Yvonne Doorduyn en Philip van Praag. Original text in Dutch: “Als het TNS Nipo-

some other influential politicians in the last three decades. According to De Landtsheer (2004, 2009), Wim Kok's MIDC personality profile consisted of substantial amounts of the conscientious pattern (scale 6). Since this is similar to the outcome of the study on Ernst Hirsch Ballin's communicated personality profile, and since both Wim Kok and Ernst Hirsch Ballin were both widely respected (and trusted or believed to be reliable and competent by Dutch citizens), De Landtsheer's study strengthens the conclusion that communicating more conscientious communicated personality patterns may help cabinet ministers attain higher levels of public credibility in the Netherlands. However, there is a possibility that these conscientious personality patterns as seen in the purple cabinets as well as in the Balkenende cabinets, are temporarily out of style, as the Dutch political culture seems to tolerate and praise more charismatic types of administrative and political leadership, such as the one displayed by Ronald Plasterk (see also Box 17).

Strong communicated personality patterns seen the second HPC cabinet minister (Ronald Plasterk) are the dauntless pattern (scale 1B), the ambitious pattern (scale 2), and the outgoing pattern (scale 3). **This communicated personality profile of dauntless-ambitious-outgoing patterns has most likely contributed to Plasterk's ability to attain higher public credibility.**

**Box 17. Communicated Personality Patterns seen in Both LPC and HPC Cabinet**

**Ministers.** The conscientious pattern was Ernst Hirsch Ballin's strongest communicated pattern, which has shaped the conclusion that communicating the characteristics associated

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onderzoek iets blootlegt, dan is het wel dat deze politieke crisis de crisis van de leiders is. Géén van de huidige politieke kopstukken kan rekenen op veel vertrouwen als mogelijke minister-president. Waar vroegere leiders als Wim Kok, Hans van Mierlo of recenter Gerrit Zalm nog het vertrouwen kregen van meer dan de helft vande bevolking – bij Kok oplopend tot bijna 70 procent – komt Bos na de val van het kabinet op een schamele 34 procent.”

with this pattern can lead to HPC. The fact that the two LPC cabinet ministers communicated some conscientious behavior as well could lead to doubts on the link between HPC and the conscientious pattern. The same goes for other patterns, such as the outgoing pattern, as seen in both HPC cabinet minister Ronald Plasterk, and LPC cabinet minister Jacqueline Cramer (MIDC scale 3). However, there are three elements that take any doubts on the conclusions of this dissertation away: the LPC cabinet ministers displayed only small amounts of the patterns associated with HPC (1); the LPC cabinet ministers did not combine these patterns with relatively large amounts of strong leadership patterns such as the dominant and ambitious patterns (2); instead, the LPC cabinet ministers combined their patterns with relatively large amounts of less desirable patterns that will be discussed further below (3). The conclusion remains: **communicating mostly conscientious-dominant patterns, and communicating mostly dauntless-ambitious-outgoing patterns, are two proven ways for cabinet ministers to attain HPC in the Netherlands.**

Ronald Plasterk communicated mainly “adventurous, individualistic [and] venturesome” (scale 1B), “strong-willed, commanding [and] assertive” (scale 2), and “warm [and] congenial” characteristics (scale 3).<sup>438</sup> According to Immelman (2004, p. 71), “in combination with the ambitious pattern (scale 2), the outgoing pattern bears some resemblance to Simonton’s (1988) charismatic executive leadership style.” Ronald Plasterk may also be called an “energetic extravert” type (Immelman, 2004, p. 71).

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<sup>438</sup> Immelman (2004).



Both HPC cabinet ministers have in common that they appeared to have positive, optimistic, strong personalities and intellectual power, without any of the more pessimistic, weaker patterns as seen in the LPC cabinet ministers (to be discussed further below). Where Ernst Hirsch Ballin appeared to combine strong morals with a knowledgeable image, Ronald Plasterk combined an optimistic world view with the ambition to make changes happen. Because of their communicated personality profiles, both ministers came across as game changers and inspired credibility-belief, which was expressed by the LISS panel respondents when they picked Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Ronald Plasterk as the two most credible cabinet ministers of the cabinet Balkenende IV.

**Box 18. The Dutch Prototype in Perspective.** Henk Te Velde (2002: 242) states that a theatrical leadership style as displayed by De Gaulle would be out of place in the Dutch political culture, because in the Netherlands we prefer a different kind of politician. He argues that attractiveness and charisma seem less important to Dutch citizens than intelligence and reliability. Do we still prefer safe and sound over exciting when it comes to leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The prototype of a higher credibility cabinet minister reveals that Te Velde was close: reliability is the first and most important quality Dutch citizens look for in a cabinet minister. Te Velde argues that the leadership preferences of Dutch citizens differ from those of other constituents. He refers to the Germans and the French to illustrate the unique Dutch aversion to theatrical leadership styles. American constituents also prefer a type of leadership that is different than the Dutch prototype. They look for more inspiring and forward-looking leaders, as revealed by Kouzes and Posner (1993, 2003). An opinion that has often been discussed in the Dutch public debate is that Americanization, populism and personification of politics are relatively new, strong forces that indicate a change in the desired leadership style.

Although I admit that leadership prototypes may change over time, they do not seem to change rapidly. Thorbecke was yet repelled by popular politicians and complained about the political culture changing. He deemed popularity “unimportant and inappropriate” (te Velde: 20). Te Velde’s discussion of Thorbecke shows that the Dutch culture inhabits a long and deeply rooted aversion against theatrical politics. From Thorbecke to Balkenende, Dutch politicians have gained political power with a steady, solid and reliable (but possibly dull) political image. At the same time, the national administration has been led by (slightly) more charismatic Prime Ministers such as Ruud Lubbers, and currently Mark Rutte. This shows that one cabinet term cannot change the preferences of Dutch citizens. There is a good chance that Dutch citizens have preferred reliable, honest and competent ministers since the times of Thorbecke, and that they will keep preferring the same characteristics for another 150 years. The fact that Dutch citizens are charmed by more charismatic politicians once in a while, does not mean that their basic preference for decent, competent, hard-working, intellectual leaders has changed, even when those leaders lack an attractive or otherwise appealing public appearance.

Ronald Plasterk and Ernst Hirsch Ballin, both HPC cabinet ministers, communicated two completely different sets of personality patterns. This demonstrates that there are several ways in which a cabinet minister can become an HPC cabinet minister. Hirsch Ballin attained public credibility in a classic way: with a professor-like appearance, as a guardian of the State of Law, and preaching principles and respect. He made a very reliable and competent impression on citizens (represented by the LISS panel). Plasterk, on the other hand, attained public credibility by using a different method. With his daring, flamboyant, and ambitious appearance, he came

across as reliable and honest (perceived competence was not his strongest pursuit), and most likely appealed especially to those who value progressive and anti-establishment politics.

In sum, the first initial element of media appearance that was expected to make a difference in the ability of cabinet ministers to attain HPC, was the number of positive and negative messages in newspaper headlines about the cabinet ministers and their performance (Chapter 7). However, HPC cabinet ministers received just as many negative comments in newspaper headlines as LPC cabinet ministers. Furthermore, headlines about HPC cabinet ministers were expected to, but did not contain more positive feedback than headlines about LPC cabinet ministers. The second initial element of media appearance, communicated personality patterns, *did* make a difference in public credibility, as discussed in Chapters 12-16. The communicated personality patterns of HPC cabinet ministers contained many more desirable characteristics such as dutiful and respectful (in the case of Ernst Hirsch Ballin) and adventurous and confident (in the case of Ronald Plasterk). The patterns of LPC cabinet ministers contained much less desirable human characteristics. In other words, within the analysis of media appearance of cabinet ministers, the amount of positive/negative feedback in newspaper headlines did not matter for credibility, while the communicated personality patterns did. This implies that **a credibility assessment of a cabinet minister made by citizens through news media, is more likely based on the perceived character or personality of the cabinet minister, than on the perceived performance of the cabinet minister.**

The last feature exclusively seen in HPC cabinet ministers is the public style and skill set with corresponding media skills. **HPC cabinet ministers featured a well-developed public style, while the LPC cabinet ministers often failed to pass this element of the style and skill assessment.** Furthermore, the inner circle interviewees had slightly ambivalent, but fairly

positive opinions about the public skills of MPC cabinet Ministers, which may explain why Guusje ter Horst and Piet Hein Donner were able to attain a fair amount of public credibility.

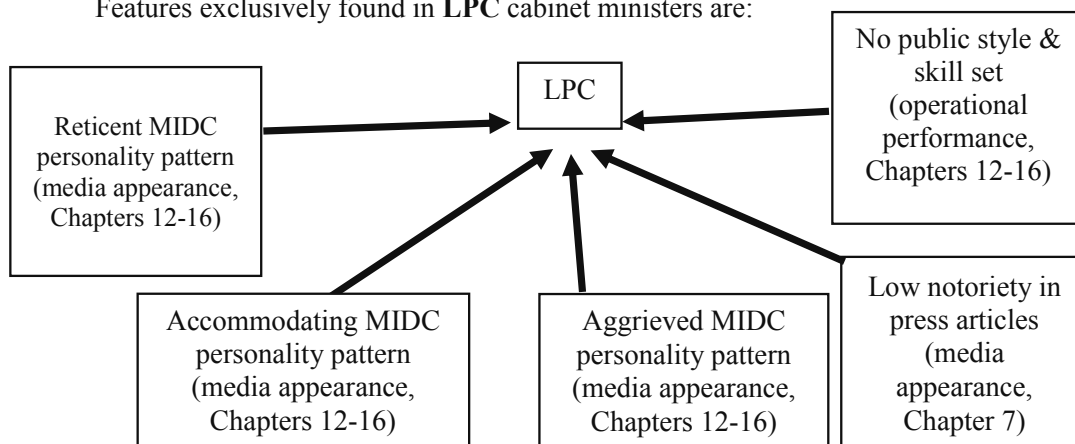
The three other ministerial styles and corresponding skill sets as discussed in Chapters 12 through 16, were the political style (political skills), the connective style (consensus building skills), and the rational style (policy making skills). These were not exclusively seen in HPC cabinet ministers.

Ernst Hirsch Ballin scored many points on the public, political, connective, and rational style according to inner circle experts, and his style and skill profile was very balanced. In Chapter 12 this suggested that four well-developed styles reflect the ideal style and skill profile for attaining HPC. However, the style and skill profile of fellow HPC Cabinet Minister Ronald Plasterk lacked points on the connective and rational styles. His only well-developed style was the public style. Consequently, the only feature that sets both HPC cabinet ministers apart from those who attained LPC is their well-developed public style and skill set. Based on the materials discussed in this dissertation, one cannot state with certainty that ministerial styles and skills make a difference in terms of the ability of a cabinet minister to attain HPC. However, a good starting point for further research is the hypothesis that of all four styles and skill sets, a cabinet minister needs to develop at least the public style (which includes media skills) in order to become an HPC cabinet minister. This public style and skill set hypothesis may have a good chance of remaining strong in the context of further research, because none of the LPC cabinet ministers had well-developed public styles. It also strengthens the aforementioned performance hypothesis (aside from the public style and skill set, actual operational performance by cabinet ministers does not matter much for their ability to attain public credibility), because **Ronald Plasterk's case has shown that a cabinet minister can attain HPC without developing the**

**skills associated with the connective style and the rational style.** The skills that make a cabinet minister a good consensus-seeker (connective style) and a good policy maker (rational style) are not always associated with HPC cabinet ministers, and therefore are not necessary to the attainment of HPC.

The features exclusively found in HPC cabinet ministers have been elaborately discussed. Now the features exclusively found in cabinet ministers who attained lower public credibility will be discussed in order to further our understanding of public credibility in action.

Features exclusively found in **LPC** cabinet ministers are:



MIDC communicated personality patterns mainly seen in LPC cabinet ministers are displayed in the picture above: the accommodating pattern (scale 4, Jacqueline Cramer), the aggrieved pattern (scale 5A, Eimert van Middelkoop), and the reticent pattern (scale 7, Eimert van Middelkoop).<sup>439</sup> These patterns made up de majority of the communicated personality profiles of LPC cabinet ministers. Therefore, communicating accommodating (scale 4),

<sup>439</sup> MIDC Criteria (Immelman, 2004) found in the source materials about lower credibility cabinet Ministers:  
EvM: A4b, c, B4a, b, C4a, b, D4b, E4a, b, c, A6a, B6a, D6b, E6a, A7b, c, B7b, C7a, b, c, D7a, b, E7a, b, c.  
JC: A4a, b, B4a, C4a, b, E4a, b, A5Aa, B5Aa, C5Aa, D5Aa, E5Aa, A6a, b, B6a, C6a, E6a, b, c.

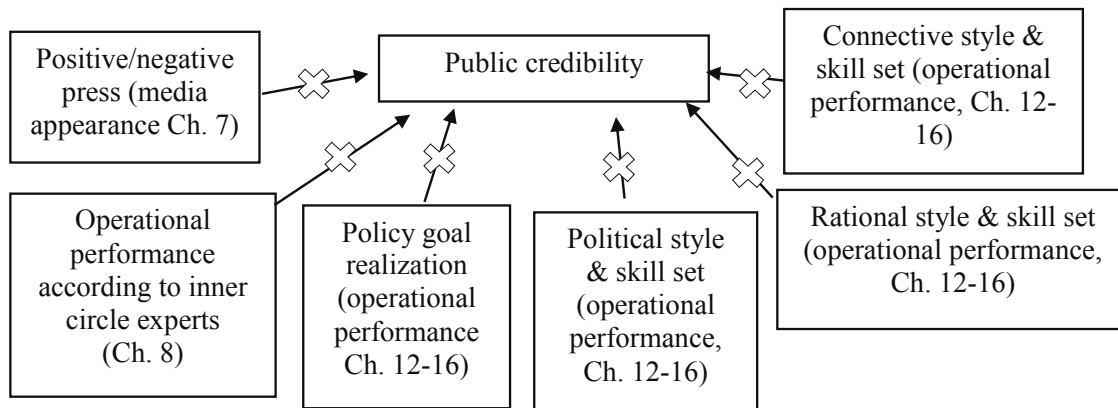
aggrieved (scale 5A), and reticent patterns (scale 7) appear to be linked to lower levels of public credibility.<sup>440</sup> These personality patterns include characteristics such as inept, submissive, naïve, and docile (scale 4); unsure and inconsequential (scale 5A); and guarded, reserved and apprehensive (scale 7). Showing these qualities could damage the image of a cabinet minister. The communicated personality profiles of the HPC cabinet ministers contained none, or almost none, of these more negatively charged MIDC personality patterns.

Furthermore, LPC cabinet ministers had low notoriety, which means that there was less media exposure about them, and they were lacking a well-developed public style and skill set (within the variable operational performance).

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<sup>440</sup> Jacqueline Cramer communicated quite some aggrieved patterns and Eimert van Middelkoop communicated a lot of the reticent pattern.

Lastly, a few distinctive features have proven to be **unrelated** to public credibility:



As indicated in the top-left corner, and previously discussed in Chapter 7, counting positive and negative comments about the performance of cabinet ministers in newspaper headlines did not explain the difference between HPC and LPC cabinet ministers.

Similarly, as indicated in the bottom-left corner of the picture above, the opinion of inner circle experts on the performance of cabinet ministers did not explain the difference between HPC and LPC cabinet ministers either. The fact that Ronald Plasterk was not unanimously admired in the inner circle of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the fact that there was widespread doubt among parliamentarians and inner circle experts in The Hague about his operational- and policy performance and skills, did not seem to stand in the way of his becoming an HPC cabinet minister. While Ernst Hirsch Ballin was liked and admired both professionally and personally by all of the ten inner circle experts who contributed to the research in this dissertation, Ronald Plasterk was not.<sup>441</sup> Even some of his closest advisors were

<sup>441</sup> During the interviews, the experts were asked to define “a good cabinet minister” and by doing so, each defined the term “operational performance.” The interviews have provided evidence for the conclusion that a cabinet minister does not have to have the support of the top-ranked advisors at his or her ministry in order to become an HPC cabinet minister.

strongly divided regarding Plasterk's performance as a cabinet minister. In other words, the inner circle at Plasterk's ministry was not unanimously convinced that he was a "good cabinet minister," while regular citizens, who only saw the minister from a distance and through news media, were convinced he was reliable, honest, competent, and in sum, credible. This suggests **there is at best only a weak link between HPC and operational performance as observed by inner circle experts.**<sup>442</sup> Maybe there is no link at all, which makes an interesting hypothesis for further research. This hypothesis implies that citizens do not know what goes on behind the scenes of a ministry, and that citizens' credibility assessments are based on matters relatively unrelated to the actual ministerial (policy) performances of cabinet ministers.

**Box 19. Inner Circle Experts as a Research Source on Operational Performance.** In this dissertation, inner circle experts were used as a source in Chapter 8, where interviews about cabinet ministers were analyzed to see whether HPC could be linked to performance. Based on opinions of people in the inner circle of cabinet ministers (political-, policy- and communications advisors), one cannot simply establish objective knowledge on the performance of cabinet Ministers. However, when at least two inner circle experts doubt the performance of a cabinet Minister, something has gone wrong. Maybe the cabinet Minister has failed to maintain a productive relationship with the advisor, which may threaten the employee's motivation and good work processes within a ministry. A lack of support in the inner circle, reflected by fundamental criticism and a lack of belief in the performance of the cabinet minister expressed by top-ranked advisors, could weaken the operational performance

<sup>442</sup> While Chapter 8 has shown that LPC and MPC cabinet ministers showed up on the "worst performance" list of several top-ranked advisors at twelve ministries, and the name of HPC cabinet minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin only showed up on the "best performance" lists of inner circle experts, Plasterk's name showed up on the "worst performance" list of one of the top-ranked advisors at his own ministry. This indicates that a lack of performance-belief in the inner circle is not necessarily linked to LPC of a cabinet minister, and vice versa: it does not always keep a cabinet minister from attaining HPC.



of a cabinet Minister as a result. Therefore, when a cabinet minister was harshly criticized by several inner circle experts, this was interpreted as a strong indication for problems with regards to operational performance.

Inner circle expert opinions were also used in Chapters 12 through 16 in order to find out what the style and skill profiles of the selected cabinet ministers were. The same methodological threats that apply to the in-depth inner circle interviews, apply to the style and skill assessments by inner circle experts. Therefore, at least two style and skill assessments per cabinet minister were carried out in order to rule out any coincidental factors. These two assessments of the cabinet minister's style and skill set were compared to one another. In some cases, the outcome was highly comparable, in other cases the two style assessments differed considerably. This shows that the style and skill assessments, just like the expert interviews, reflect *just* an assessment, not the absolute truth. Inner circle experts are specialized in promoting the quality of decision making and ministerial communication on behalf of the cabinet ministers. Their knowledge and experience as inner circle advisors enables them to compare how the cabinet minister *should* perform (according to their knowledge) with the way he or she *actually* performs. The style and skill assessment instrument was designed to capture this information about the quality of the performance of cabinet ministers according to inner circle experts.

Another feature seemingly unrelated to the ability of cabinet ministers to attain public credibility concerns policy performance. **A cabinet minister does not have to create a flawless policy goal realization, nor does he or she have to satisfy the entire Parliament on accountability day in order to become an HPC cabinet minister.** While Ernst Hirsch Ballin

realized all of his policy goals in 2008 and 2009, Ronald Plasterk's goal realization was not spotless and some inner circle experts questioned his ability to fulfill some of the more traditional, policy related tasks of a cabinet minister's work. Also, the policy goal realization of Eimert van Middelkoop (an LPC cabinet minister) was nearly flawless, while the policy goal realization of Jacqueline Cramer (LPC) and Guusje ter Horst (MPC) were incomplete both in 2008 and in 2009. In sum, HPC and MPC cabinet ministers have shown a flawed policy goal realization, while an LPC cabinet minister (Eimert van Middelkoop) was on track with his policy goals every year, and did not face much criticism from the Parliament on this aspect of his work (he mainly faced criticism on his press interviews and his 'slips of the tongue', as discussed in Chapter 15).<sup>443</sup>

Lastly, **the three style and skill sets that seem unrelated to the ability of cabinet ministers to attain HPC, are the political, connective and rational style and skill set.** This conclusion emerged in Chapters 12-16 when some LPC cabinet ministers mastered some of these aspects of operational performance, while an HPC cabinet minister (Ronald Plasterk) did not, according to several inner circle experts.

**In sum, indicative for the public credibility of a cabinet minister are notoriety (1), media skills (2), and communicated personality patterns (3).** As it turns out, citizens shape their credibility judgment oblivious of the quality of a cabinet ministers' operational work. They

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<sup>443</sup> Van Middelkoop's operational performance was (respectfully) criticized by inner-circle experts, but only on media performance and insofar as his media appearance was problematic. Inner circle experts stated that Van Middelkoop was a decent minister when it came to traditional core ministerial tasks, and that he had a good understanding of his policy field (see Chapter 8). However, according to the inner-circle experts, he could have done a lot better if his public credibility had not been so problematic.

do not include the assessment of operational skills (other than media skills) and policy goal realization into their credibility verdict.

These conclusions support the opinion of Mr. R van Zwol discussed in the introduction: to succeed as a cabinet minister in a media dominated political environment, having a good communications advisor is more important than having a good policy advisor. While success can be defined in many ways, public credibility is a hard requirement. After all, in a world where public credibility can make or break a cabinet minister, what is known by the masses matters most for their political survival. A lack of public credibility can lead to early resignation of cabinet ministers.<sup>444</sup> Therefore, remaining seated (and attaining public credibility to achieve that), should always be the first concern, because only while seated, cabinet ministers have a chance to accomplish their goals.

All cabinet ministers know the devastating effect image problems can have on their ability to change their policy field for the better. This is what drives the mechanism that makes attaining, or maintaining, public credibility so important. Several of the inner circle experts believe that this mechanism may force policy-making responsibilities to the background. In other words, quality control on operational performance within a ministry may be overshadowed by the constant, sometimes all-consuming need for image building and -repair. Ministries seem to be under the spell of this incentive to take care of a cabinet minister's public credibility first, before all other priorities.

Related to this discussion is the fact that, according to inner circle experts, some cabinet ministers did not succeed with regards to the traditional core business of a ministry, which includes operational performance, ministerial skills and, specifically, realizing policy goals. Of

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<sup>444</sup> As seen in the case of Ella Vogelaar, who resigned in 2008, reportedly because of a lack of public credibility.

the four cases at either end of the credibility ranking, two cabinet ministers have realized their policy goals, and only one of them has attained HPC (Hirsch Ballin).

Undoubtedly the cabinet ministers who did not realize all of their policy goals (LPC Minister Cramer, HPC Minister Plasterk and MPC Minister Ter Horst) spent a lot of their time and energy improving their public credibility, some more successfully than others. For example, Ronald Plasterk was known for his media talents. His public credibility was higher than that of most other cabinet ministers, but experts working for Ronald Plasterk have stated that policy accomplishments seemed less important to the cabinet minister than fulfilling his job as a public ambassador of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (which could have been a strategy as a result of his awareness on the importance of public credibility).

While HPC Minister Plasterk's media efforts were successful, LPC Minister Cramer spent a considerable amount of time and energy trying to recover from the impact of negative press, and reportedly hired renowned spin doctor Dig Ishta to help improving her image. She nevertheless remained a target for public criticism. In her case, difficulties with regard to public credibility may have taken a considerable amount of her time and energy away from her core-business. HPC minister Plasterk and LPC minister Cramer have in common that they spent a lot of time and energy on image-building while their policy performance stagnated. The difference is that Plasterk's media efforts were a lot more fruitful than Cramer's, proof of which has been discussed in Part II of this dissertation: Ronald Plasterk attained more perceived reliability, honesty and competence than most of his colleagues, Cramer attained the least of all cabinet ministers.

According to inner circle experts at the Justice and Defense ministries, the two cabinet ministers who did realize their policy goals (HPC Minister Hirsch Ballin and LPC Minister Van

Middelkoop), were both known to greatly value the traditional tasks of a cabinet minister. They considered tasks related to policy performance their core business, and therefore their main concern.<sup>445</sup> This focus on policy performance can be found in both LPC and HPC cabinet ministers, and therefore seems unrelated to the ability of a cabinet minister to attain HPC.

Attaining HPC can coexist with a flawless policy performance, which shows that a cabinet minister who creates a higher-credibility image does not have to compromise traditional ministerial tasks. After all, HPC Minister Hirsch Ballin's policy goals were complicated but he realized them successfully and showed a flawless policy performance in Chapter 8 and 12.<sup>446</sup> Also, attaining HPC can coexist with a less-than-perfect media appearance (see Box 18). HPC Minister Hirsch Ballin was not praised as much for his media appearance as for his (policy) performance by inner-circle experts. Public relations specialists at the Ministry of Justice reported that Hirsch Ballin was not a "smooth talker" when addressing news media. MPC minister Ter Horst, on the other hand, was believed to be more media savvy, but she did not attain HPC (although she came close).<sup>447</sup> This shows that a cabinet minister with a less aggressive personal media campaign, who seems to value operational performance more than media appearance, can still attain HPC, as long as the basic media skills of the public style are

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<sup>445</sup> Eimert van Middelkoop faced quite a lot of negative exposure during his term, but decided to spend his energy on his policies and focused on international circles instead of the media. As mentioned by one of his top-advisors, GF, Van Middelkoop was bothered by the negative media exposure, and he and his advisors worked on improving his media appearances over time, but there was no conclusive or ambitious strategy for a media campaign, nor was Van Middelkoop blessed with a natural talent for media performance like some of the other ministers in the cabinet Balkenende IV.

<sup>446</sup> Additionally, all of the inner circle experts who mentioned Ernst Hirsch Ballin, believed that he was a good successful cabinet minister, and one of the best of the cabinet. This includes the inner circle experts who worked directly for him as a cabinet minister.

<sup>447</sup> For example, when Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Guusje ter Horst were at a public meeting together, Ter Horst was known for her media savvy approach. She made sure to be there when a photo opportunity emerged, and she, not Hirsch Ballin, received most of the attention when her photo appeared in the newspaper the following day.

covered.<sup>448</sup> In sum, although media appearance influences public credibility more than operational performance does, a cabinet minister does not have to prioritize a media campaign over operational performance in order to attain higher public credibility. A cabinet minister can still realize all policy goals in time, even when there are many complicated goals, and attain higher public credibility at the same time. A conscientious and mature appearance everywhere he went, seems to have raised Hirsch Ballin's HPC in a way that made an ambitious personal media campaign unnecessary.

Guusje ter Horst, although considered talented and ambitious when it came to image-building (according to inner circle experts), did not attain HPC,<sup>449</sup> most likely due to shortcomings in her communicated personality profile. She could have attained public credibility the way Ernst Hirsch Ballin did by showing a highly conscientious and slightly dominant communicated personality profile. But Guusje ter Horst only communicated dominant patterns and lacked that confidence-installing conscientious pattern the Dutch seem so fond of. Or Ter Horst could have attained public credibility the way Ronald Plasterk did by showing more outgoing patterns in addition to her ambitious communicated personality pattern, which

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<sup>448</sup> The basic skills (of the style & skill assessment) each cabinet minister with a public style masters according to inner circle interviewees, concern building a public image carefully, being comfortable in the spot-light, and creating a good media performance, including a good TV performance. Television performances were not Hirsch Ballin's strongest asset according to his inner circle experts, because his language was often too complicated for regular citizens to comprehend, but he nevertheless made a reliable impression on TV, which caused inner circle experts to give him quite some points on this aspect of the public style after all. The four aspects of the public style and skill set were exclusively seen in HPC cabinet ministers, and according to some inner circle experts, MPC minister Ter Horst had a well-developed public style as well. The four aspects of the public style and skill set were not seen in the LPC cabinet ministers. This has led to the conclusion that the public style and skill set needs to be sufficiently developed in order to become an HPC cabinet minister. However, the public style and skill set cover basic media skills, not (aggressive) personal media campaigns. Since the personal campaigns of the selected MPC and LPC cabinet ministers have not led to HPC, and since HPC cabinet Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin was known for his focus on policies rather than spending his energy on a large personal campaign, they seem unrelated to the ability of cabinet ministers to attain HPC.

<sup>449</sup> However, of all female cabinet ministers, she was the most credible in the eyes of the public, which means that she has accomplished more than her female colleagues in terms of public credibility.

theoretically could have led to Simonton's (1988) charismatic executive leadership style or an "energetic extravert" appearance (Immelman, 2004, p. 71).

**Not all personal campaigns seem to help cabinet ministers to attain higher public credibility. It all depends on *how* a cabinet minister communicates with the public: appearing conscientious-dominant, or dauntless-ambitious-outgoing are two excellent ways to attain higher public credibility.**

Could public credibility be forced upon any cabinet minister as suggested here? Most likely not. Just like the personal qualities that make up the credibility profile (reliability, honesty and competence), the communicated personality patterns that seem related to a cabinet minister's ability to attain HPC, may be strongly connected to the person in the cabinet minister. Consequently, consistent, top-quality acting, maybe even a full identity make-over, would be required on a daily basis to turn a Van Middelkoop into a Hirsch Ballin (or a Cramer into a Plasterk). However, even though Cramer cannot transform herself into a copy of Ronald Plasterk, because she is simply a different human being, she could downplay the negative patterns in her communicated personality profile. Since the communicated personality patterns that were associated with LPC seem to have a strong influence on a cabinet minister's ability to attain public credibility, this would have to be her first concern. When the negative patterns are less obvious, most of the criticism should subside, because journalists would have to find another cabinet minister, someone with more obvious flaws, to pick on. The second step would be enhancing the patterns that are associated with HPC. Ideally, these are patterns that naturally fit the personality and current image of the cabinet minister.

In sum, ministerial media appearance (media skills, notoriety and certain communicated personality profiles) matters most for public credibility, and public credibility is a requirement

for political and ministerial power and success in The Hague. Thus, appearance should be taken care of in order to become a powerful and successful cabinet minister. In this conclusion operational performance does not play a role in the process of attaining public credibility, because it has not proven to make much of a difference (for the analyses see Chapters 8 and 12 through 16). Appearing successful is enough to survive as a cabinet minister, oblivious of the presence of ministerial skills (other than media skills), policy performance and inner-circle opinions on the performance of a cabinet minister:

Appropriate appearance ➡ Higher Public Credibility (HPC) ➡ Ministerial Power

I call the formula above “the Plasterk formula”. This formula has the a-moral character of Machiavelli’s advice to The Prince in 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Based on this dissertation, Machiavelli was right when he said that “everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are” (Machiavelli, 2009, p. 69). Ronald Plasterk’s appearance gave him higher public credibility, which gave him the ministerial power to survive as a cabinet minister.

However, the Plasterk formula is not the only formula that can be drawn from the research presented in this dissertation. Ministerial power is not the final aim of all modern-day cabinet ministers in the Netherlands, as the interviews discussed in Chapter 8 have revealed. Many cabinet ministers in the Netherlands often express the intention to take care of the common interest, and some are true idealists. Although broadcasting their need to “do good things” could be part of a PR-strategy, a majority of the inner-circle experts believe that their cabinet ministers have intentions that are morally based and according to established and common political and cultural beliefs. So their power and success is usually, and ideally, used in order to change their ministry and their policy field for the better, even though in a political world it is not always clear what “better” is.



The Dutch parliamentary democracy aims to distribute politically and democratically legitimate assignments to the ministries, where those assignments (e.g. policy goals) can be completed. When a cabinet minister lacks the right appearance, he or she will lack public credibility. Without public credibility, ministerial power is most likely sub-optimal, and as a result, the ministerial assignments cannot be fully completed.<sup>450</sup> Below a last step is added, which takes the Machiavellian element out of the formula, and shows what can be done if, and only if, the right appearance and higher public credibility are a cabinet minister's first, but not only concern:

Appropriate appearance ➡ HPC ➡ Ministerial Power ➡ Completion of assignments

I call this formula “the Ernst Hirsch Ballin formula”. Here, a cabinet minister works on his or her appearance in order to eventually complete assignments. This brings us back to the advice of R. Van Zwol (see general introduction), who observed that nowadays a good director of communications is more important than a good secretary-general, for the operational success of a cabinet minister. After all, without the right appearance, the work of a cabinet minister will be made very difficult, due to a lack of public credibility and (political) support from circles surrounding the ministry. Without public credibility, cabinet ministers may be forced to resign, like Ella Vogelaar in 2008. When public credibility is low, and there is no forced resignation, the cabinet minister can stay, but ministerial power will be limited, which was the case for Eimert van Middelkoop and Jacqueline Cramer. Although Eimert van Middelkoop realized his single policy goal, the inner circle experts believed that his efforts to achieve change would have been a lot more effective if he had attained higher public credibility and more (political) support from

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<sup>450</sup> Even though LPC Cabinet Minister Eimert van Middelkoop had achieved his policy goal, parts of his operational performance were criticized by inner-circle interviewees (see style and skill test results), and inner-circle experts noted that Eimert van Middelkoop's operational performance suffered as a result of his lower public credibility.

inner- and outer circles (see Chapter 8). Cramer's appearance was not according to the demands of Dutch citizens as described in Parts I and II (she lacked mainly perceived reliability and competence), due to which her public credibility was low, which in turn kept her ministerial power from growing. She was on the verge of resignation a few times during her term, and failed to complete her assignments.

In sum, this dissertation shows that appearance, rather than performance, leads to higher public credibility. When public credibility is relatively low, ministerial power and the completion of assignments in a broader sense than just policy goal realization, both become very difficult to achieve. Performance becomes possible, but is not guaranteed, when public credibility is relatively high.

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